

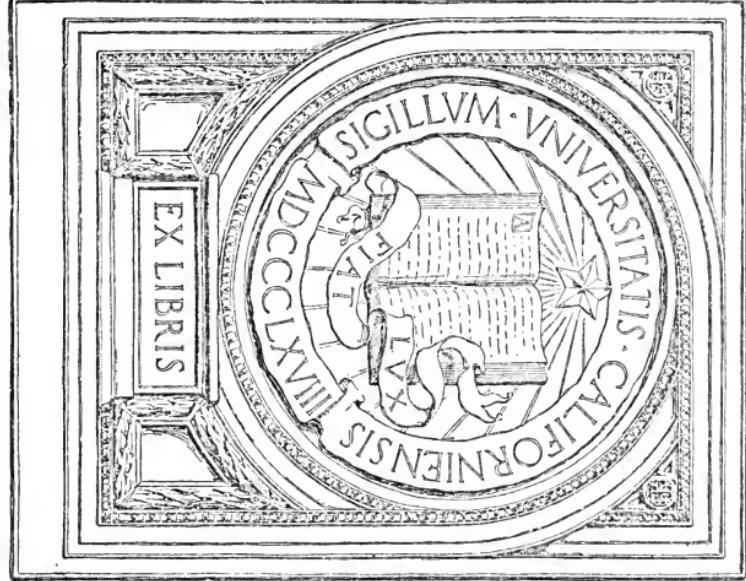
To Greenland
by the
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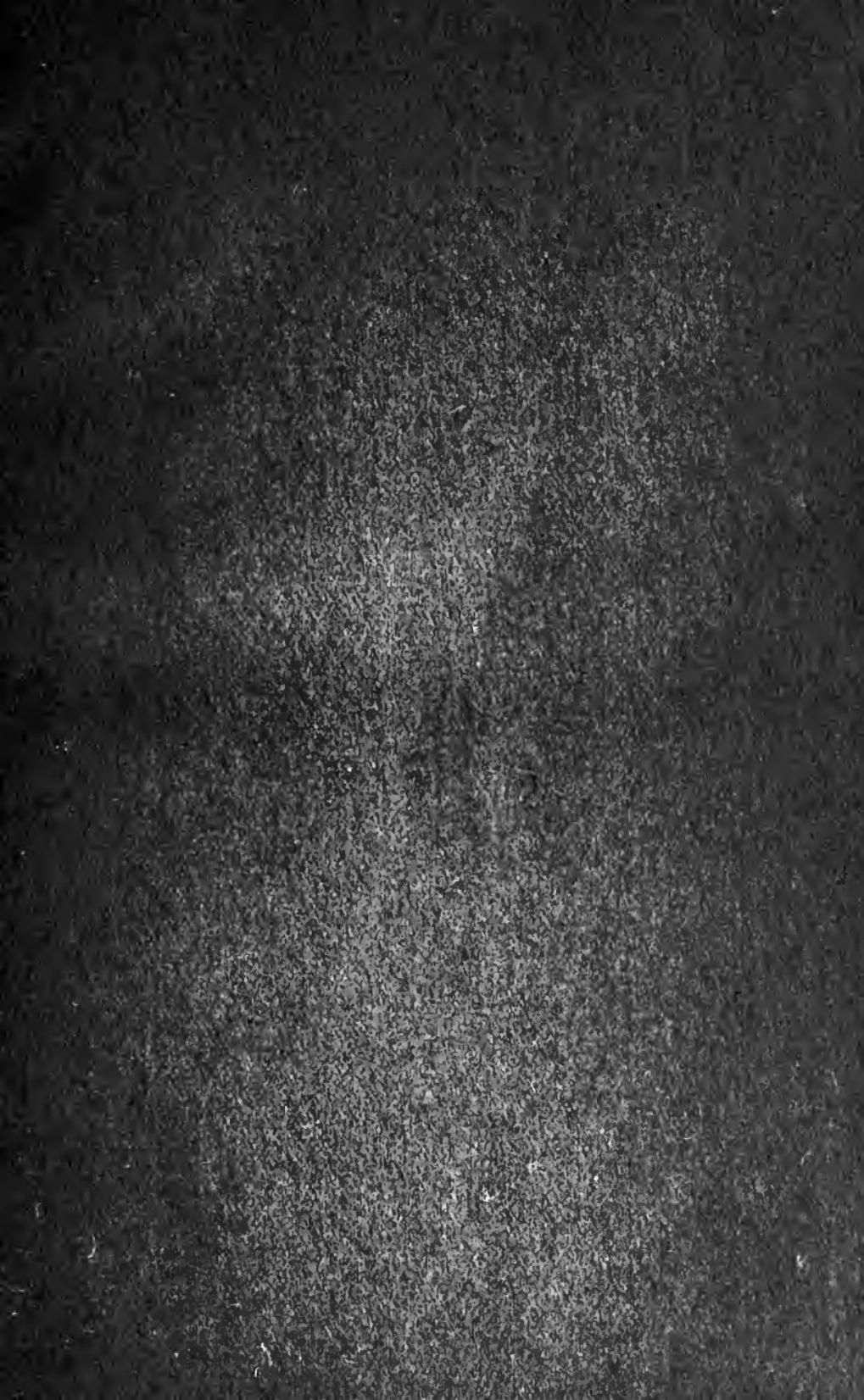


LONDON STABLES, WORCESTER



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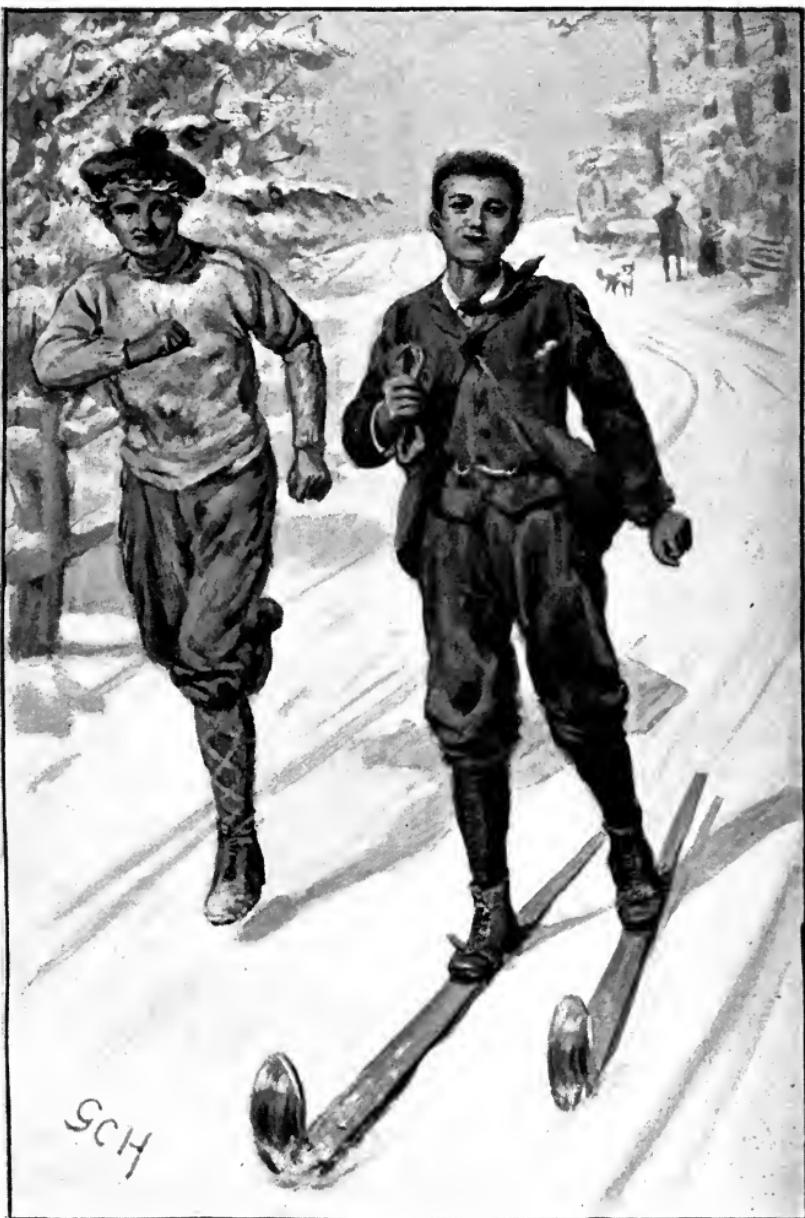




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TO

GREENLAND AND THE POLE

A STORY OF

ADVENTURE IN THE ARCTIC REGIONS

BY

1840-1910,

GORDON STABLES, M.D., C.M.

(Surgeon Royal Navy)

Author of "Twixt School and College", "Westward with Columbus", &c.

WITH EIGHT FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS BY G. C. HINDLEY
AND A MAP



LONDON

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TO

FRIDJOF NANSEN

(THE BRAVEST OF ARCTIC EXPLORERS)

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

WITH

WISHES AND PRAYERS FOR HIS SAFE RETURN

BY

THE AUTHOR



PREFACE.

Prefaces, like dentists, are sometimes necessary evils, and we have to bear with them, putting the best face on the matter that we possibly can. Now, in this preface I want only to tell you that, though in some parts sadness and grief creep into the pages of this book—towards the end, for this was inevitable—on the whole, you will find little else save joy and jollity throughout. Nansen, the brave Arctic explorer—whom may God bring back from his daring venture—you will have no difficulty in recognizing as the prototype of my chief hero Reynolds. Rudland Syme is a Greenland surgeon sketched from life; Sigurd was also a real live sailor, and may be so still, for aught I know; while as for honest Joe the mate, he was a shipmate of my own during my first Arctic cruise, and a hearty happy-go-lucky fellow he was. We roughed it together years and years ago, in and on the Sea of Ice, in a way few are called upon to do nowadays. Let me say, further, that the description of the ice and ice adventures are mostly taken from journals of my own. But I must acknowledge my indebtedness to the *First Crossing of Greenland* (Nansen), published by Messrs. Longmans, Green, & Co., for my ideas on “skilöbning”, or snow-shoe travelling as carried out in Norway. I have not followed Nansen’s route across the inland ice, however, for being a month earlier in the season I have taken my people farther north, and brought them out at Disko Bay.

GORDON STABLES.



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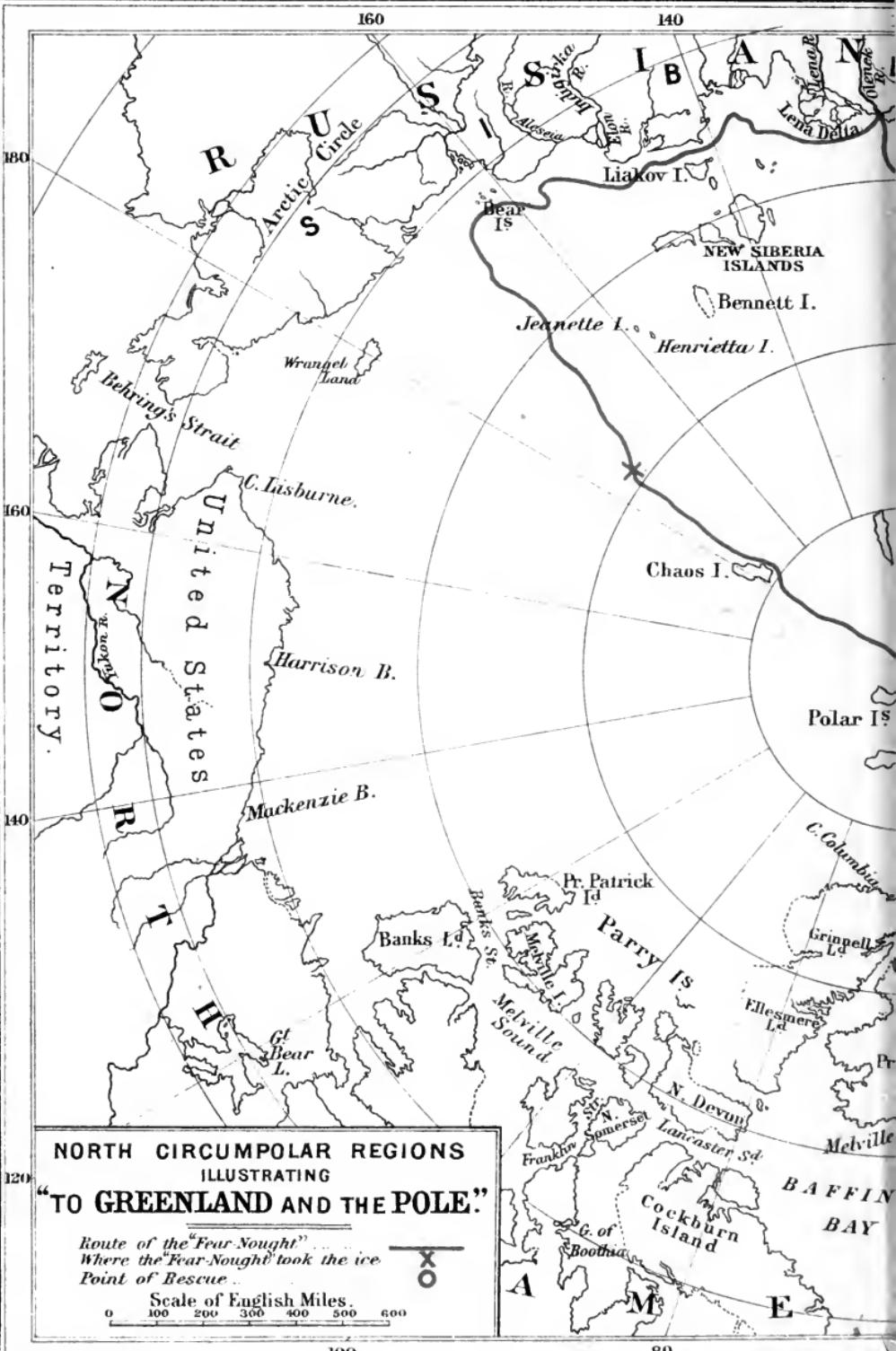
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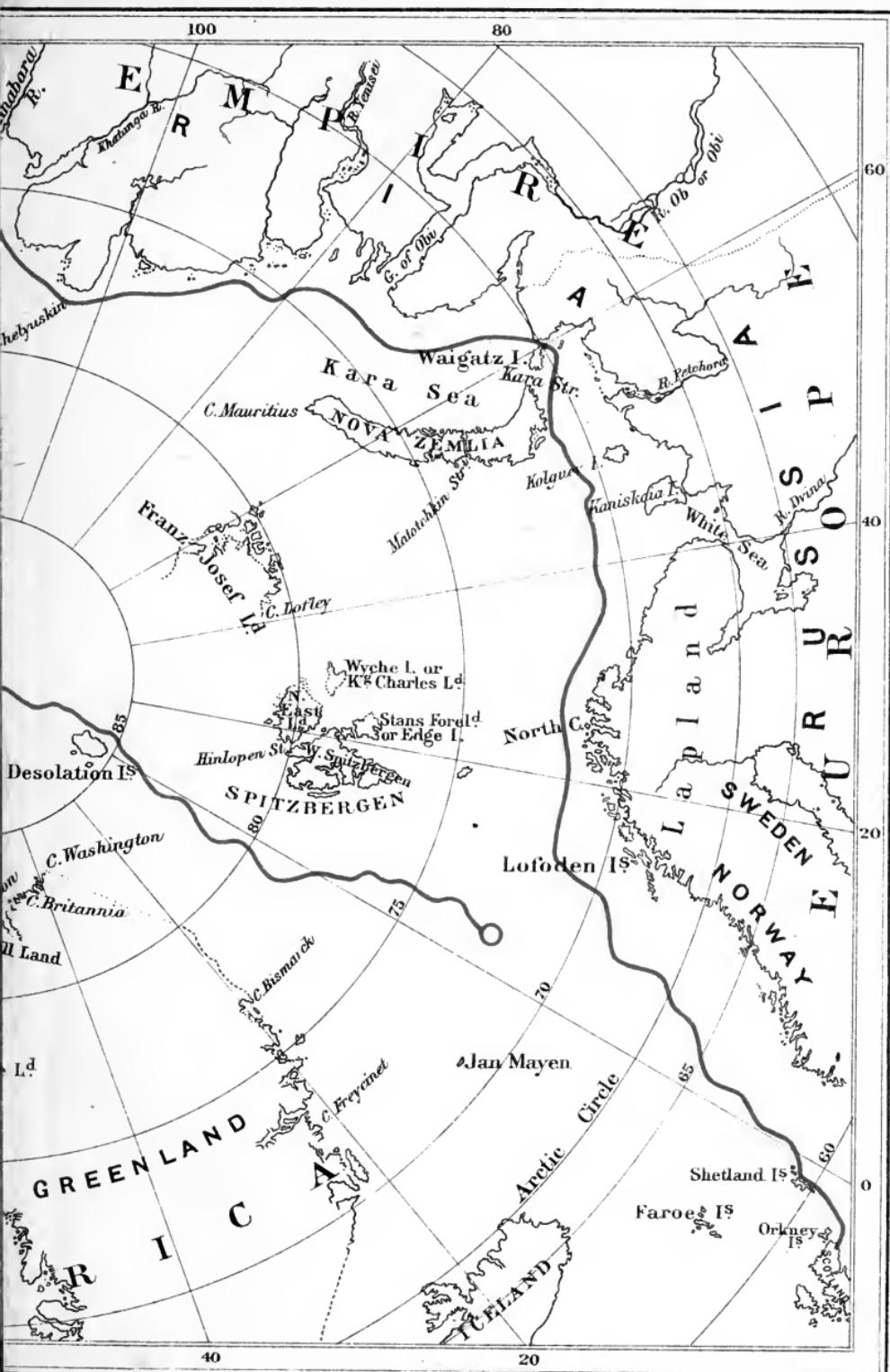
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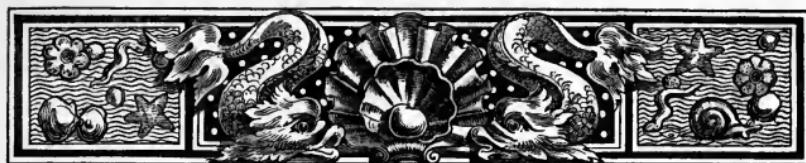
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TO GREENLAND AND THE POLE.

BOOK I. IN SNOW-CLAD WILDS.

CHAPTER I.

A STRING OF MOUNTAIN TROUT.



LOVELY night in autumn.

And surely no town in all the world is seen to greater advantage, under the light of a full moon, than the far-famed Granite City—Aberdeen.

In this particular evening—or, is it not rather morning? for solemnly in the still air, the clocks in the steeples have long since boomed forth the midnight hour—every house in mile-long Union Street stands out like a palace built of marble, or of frosted silver, while the rows of lamps, that stretch from end to end and have not yet been extinguished, look like two chains of gold.

It is indeed a lovely night!

Two great cannons, captured at Sebastopol, stand in Castle-gate, near to the old romantic cross, and point threateningly adown the splendid snow-white thoroughfare. But never more will their thunders be heard. The life is as clean gone from those obsolete guns as from the brave men who defended them and fell by their side.

But sitting astride of one of them, and apparently lost in thought, is Colin M'Ivor.¹

¹ Pronounced MacEevor.

Only a boy is Colin, though, being fifteen, he deems himself a man. Almost a man in stature, indeed, he is. The moonbeams are shining on his handsome brown face. The night-breeze is toying with his rebellious yellow hair, and, though there is a far-away dreamy kind of look in his eyes, as he gazes along the silent street, there is a smile hovering round his lips.

Across his back diagonally is hung a large botanical case, and he holds in one hand, pointed like a spear towards the starry sky, a fishing-rod in its canvas case.

Colin is at present deep in thought, so deep, indeed, that he does not hear the footsteps of a night policeman who is approaching from behind. This sturdy fellow appears to be somewhat startled at Colin's strange apparition, for several times as he advances he bends low toward the ground, to bring the boy between him and the moonlit sky, so as to make sure his eyes do not deceive him.

"Ahem! Hem!"

Colin looks slowly round.

"Weel, my bonnie birkie, that's a funny horse ye ride at this untineous hoor o' nicht. But it will be a lang time afore he gallops hame wi' ye. Would ye no be better in your bed, my mannie?"

Colin burst into a right merry laugh.

"Yes," he said, "it must seem funny to you, seeing me astride of this old black nag, without saddle, bridle, or bit. But, bless you, Bobby, this is nothing to the droll things I do at times."

"Nay, nay?" said the policeman inquiringly.

"No, nothing."

"But winna your father and mother think you've tint¹ yourself?"

"O, Bobby, I have no father and no mother. Father was killed long, long ago in the Crimean War—he might have fallen beneath this very gun—and poor mother wore away last year."

The policeman was visibly softened. He had a big lump of a heart of his own. Even a policeman may possess a heart, you know.

¹Lost.

"Poor orphan bairn!" he said, drawing his rough coat sleeve across his eyes. "But ye have somebody that belangs to ye?"

"I have an aunt in the city, Bobby."

"And the puir auld thing will be worryin' about ye. Better rin hame, laddie, better rin aff hame."

"O no, I sha'n't. You see, it's like this, Bobby; I live with my uncle

'Far lone amang the Hielan' hills',

and he lets me do as I like. As a rule, Bobby, everybody lets me do as I like. Well, this morning early, Flesher Coutts drove me all the way to Ben-a-Chie—and his mare can go, too, Bobby: you should just see her. Sixteen miles an hour. O, it was lovely! Well, you see, I had plenty of food in my case, so I wandered about and fished in the burns all day, and at darkling I started for the city here."

"And you've walked a' the road your leefu' lane,¹ puir bairn? But fu² do ye no gang stracht hame to your bit auntie?"

"O, she doesn't expect me. If I had gotten here sooner I should have gone to her. But, O, Bobby, at this dreary hour, I should scare her life out, and the life out of all the servants as well."

"But, my conscience, laddie, ye canna sit stride-legs on that auld rattler o' a gun a' the live-lang nicht."

"Bobby, you mustn't call it an old rattler of a gun. Mind you, this gun has seen service. Bold Russian soldiers fought for its possession and dropped dead beside it, under the clash and rush of our Highland claymores. If you bend down you can see even yet blood splashes on the carriage wheels that the dark paint cannot quite cover. And, Bobby, my father belonged to the Highland brigade, and as you came up, I was just thinking that he might have died by this gun. It was a glorious fight! How I wish I had been by father's side, pistol in hand and red sword waving o'er my head—"

"Wheesht! Wheesht, laddie! Dinna talk o' blood-red

¹ All by yourself.

² Why.

swords at sich a solemn hoor o' nicht. Hark! Boom! Dinna ye hear it? One o'clock. Losh! the sound made my heart jump. And now I maun be aff."

But Colin said, "Wait half a minute, Bobby."

Then he quickly whirled his botanical case round in front of him, opened it, and took therefrom a handsome string of mountain trout.

"Take these for your breakfast, Bobby."

"Weel, laddie. Mony, mony thanks; but how can I walk about a' nicht wi' a string o' trouts in ma han'? I'll tell ye, sir—"

"My name is Colin—Colin M'Ivor."

"I'll tell you, Colin, hoo ye can add to the obledgegement and do yourself' a good turn at the same time."

"Well, Bobby."

"Well, my mither is sittin' up a' nicht, and my sister Katie, waitin' for my uncle. He is comin' wi' the *Queen*."

"With the queen, Bobby?"

"The *Queen* steamboat, ye ken."

"O yes, I've heard of her. And your uncle is coming with this boat?"

"That he is, if he binna¹ droond't. And, man, laddie, he'll be fearfu' hungry, and what a treat they troots would be to him!"

"Well?"

"Weel," continued the policeman, handing Colin an envelope which the boy read by the light of the moon, "that is my minney's² address. Constitution Street isn't ten minutes walk fae here. Get aff your iron horse—your warlike steed—and tak' the troots to her. My minney and Katie will mak' you hearty welcome, and you can curl up there a' nicht. Noo I'm aff. Duty is duty."

"And I'm off too. Good-night, Bobby."

Next minute, with his fishing-rod at the trail in one hand and that string of mountain trout in the other, Colin M'Ivor, who knew the city well, was marching off *en route* for Constitution Street.

It was not long before he reached the place, and he soon

¹ Be not.

² Mother's

found the number. A pretty little granite-built cottage with a trim garden in front and a brass knocker with which Colin beat a merry tattoo, for he could hear voices in conversation in one of the lower rooms, the light from the window of which streamed out across the flower-beds, and tried conclusions with the moonbeams.

There was instantaneous silence, then Colin could hear someone advancing along the passage.

"Fa's¹ there?"

"It is only me," replied Colin.

"And fa on earth are ye?"

"I'm Colin M'Ivor from the Highland hills, and I've brought a string of mountain trout for uncle's supper when he comes in the *Queen* steamer."

The word uncle was the open sesame.

A chain rattled, and next moment the moonbeams shone brightly on the cheerful face of a little woman in black, who wore a widow's cap.

"Come in, laddie, come in; but what a fright ye gave Katie and me! Ye see, John Jackson—that is my young son—is awa' on his beat, and I kent² it couldna be him."

Colin laughed.

"O yes," he said, "I've just left your son John."

"Jist left him; and fat was he deein'?"³

"Doing? Sitting stride-legs on a big gun in Castle Street and thinking about his father."

The little widow turned her palms and eyes skywards.

"O, my puir son John!" she cried. "Stride-legs on a gun! My John! O, Katie, my darlin', come here. John has gane fey."⁴

Colin had expected to see in Katie a tall young lady about John's own build. Instead, she was but a fragile, fairy-looking thing of some twelve summers, with big wondering eyes, and long hair floating over her shoulders.

Colin now made haste to explain that it was he himself,

¹ Who is.

² Knew.

³ Doing.

⁴ A peculiar kind of madness said to attack people who are soon to die suddenly.

and not John, who was astride of the gun, and that John merely stood beside it, listening to his (Colin's) chatter.

The boy with his string of mountain trout was now ushered "ben" the house into one of the cosiest wee parlours ever he had seen.

A cheerful fire burned clear and bright in the grate; a kettle sang on the hob; on a footstool a monster tabby cat sat singing and nodding, and on the hearth-rug near lay a lovely collie dog, who got up, and with his tail wagged Colin M'Ivor a hearty welcome.

Colin threw himself down on the rug beside the dog, quite free-and-easy fashion, and then proceeded to explain the reason of his coming here at all.

"Weel," said the widow, "onybody that my son John sends here is just as welcome as the gowans¹ in May. My son John is a simple sumph,² and mair fitted for a ploughboy than a policeman; but since his poor father's death we have a' had a doon-come."

"I'm so sorry to hear it."

"Farmer folks we were, ye know"—the little widow was doing her best to talk English now—"farmer folks from far ayont the Buck o' Cabrach."

"Why," cried Colin, "my uncle doesn't live a hundred miles from there."

"And John, he held the plough; and there wasna a bonnier, or more smilin'-looking farm than ours in all the kintra side. But woe is me! the bad years came; the wild snowy springs; the frost that cut the briard;³ the wet, cruel harvests; and the foot-and-mouth disease. Then ruin stared us in the face. John, my husband, bore it well and bravely, but I could see that the frosts o' affliction were cutting him down, as the frosts o' spring had cut the briard. He grew bent and frail and weak, and in the fa' o' the year he wore awa' to his lang hame in the mools. Heigh-ho! heigh-ho!"

The widow hastily dried the tears that had begun to fall.

"But," she cried, smiling once more, "it is wrang, wrang o' me to talk about myself, and, laddie, ye must forgive me."

"Yes, certainly."

¹ Mountain daisies.

² A simple fellow.

³ The spring corn.

Colin had risen now and pulled his Highland bonnet from his pocket.

"What!" said the widow; "you're no surely goin' awa'. Na, na, laddie, here ye roost till mornin'."

"Mother," said Colin, a merry laugh lighting up his face, "everybody lets me do just as I please, and so must you. I'm not going away for good. I'll be back in an hour. Only I promised myself a look at the sea. I'm very fond of the sea, and I believe I am going to be a sailor. But on a lovely night like this I would not miss seeing the waves for a great deal. Bye, bye; I'll soon be back, and if I hear anything of the steamer I will run all the way here to tell you, and then Katie can cook the string of mountain trout for uncle's supper. Bye, bye, Katie."

And out into the moonlight once more went Colin M'Ivor.

The Broad Hill is an eminence which separates the Old Town links from the New Town links, and it was thither the lad now bent his steps.

He shortly reached it, and quickly climbed to the top and threw himself on one of the benches, pulling up his legs, the better to rest, for, young and strong though he was, he really felt tired.

How brightly the moon shone over the sea! The waves sparkled in its rays like molten silver, and a dreamy haze was cast over the distant lighthouse and the pier-head, that jutted out seawards like a low, stone-built fort!

There was scarcely a sound to be heard, except the murmur of the snow-white lines of breakers tumbling in upon the sands. But now and then the weird cry of a sea-bird fell upon the boy's ears, or up from the city behind him might be borne the song of some belated reveller finding his way homewards.

Colin had sat on the bench for quite a long time and was almost asleep, when suddenly he started up as wide-awake as ever he had been in his life. Had he heard someone moaning as if in pain, or was it but the deception of a dream? No, it was no dream. For there it was again, pitiable, painful, prolonged.

Colin, like all mountaineers, had very acute hearing, and he now followed the sounds farther up and across the broad green hill. And soon he can see a human figure, darkling in the moonlight, stretched beside an iron bench.

He is kneeling beside it now.

A boy about his own age, perhaps, but though well-knit as to frame, much lighter and smaller. There is a ghastly wound on the brow, from which the blood has been welling, and has formed a dark pool near to the bench.

Colin takes the hands in his own to rub and to chafe. They are very small hands, and are deathly cold. He gently raises the shoulders. The head falls back like that of a dead bird.

What shall Colin do? For a time he is puzzled, perplexed. If he leaves the lad here he will soon die.

He can tell by his dress that he is no mere street boy. But were he the commonest gutter-snipe Colin would assist him. Near the body lies a broken sextant or quadrant, Colin cannot tell which. The boy may be a sailor.

But there is no time to waste in foolish conjectures. What he does, he must do quickly. So he takes out his handkerchief and binds it across the unhappy lad's brow. Then he lifts him gently up in his arms, as one carries a child.

"Why, how light he is!" says Colin to himself. "And how strong am I!"

But light though the little stranger is, before Colin has carried him a quarter of a mile he is tired, and begins to pant and stagger.

At this moment, luckily, he sees someone approaching. It is a young working-man going thus early to the mills to relieve someone else; but when Colin explains all, he readily consents to help to carry the inanimate burden as far as Constitution Street.

"I was just aff," he says, "to relieve ma neebour's shift; but he can shift for himself' the nicht; for losh, laddie, this is an errand o' mercy, and he would hae a hard heart that would refuse to do the Good Samaritan in a case like this."

As soon as they got near to the cottage, Colin left the

workman holding the boy in his arms, until he should run on and break the news to Widow Jackson.

"O, Mrs. Jackson," he said, "don't be alarmed; but I found a poor young lad on the Broad Hill who has evidently been attacked and robbed, and I fear he is nearly dead!"

"And you've left him!"

"No, no, mother. A young mechanic helped me to carry him home, and he is just outside."

"Bring him in, my laddie; bring him in. I'll bustle about and get hot water for his feet."

"This way," she said to the mechanic, who bore the little wounded stranger as easily as if he had been a baby. "This way, my man. Luckily we have a spare room, and the nicht¹ there is a fire in it."

Upstairs she went, and the mechanic followed; then, while Mrs. Jackson hurried off to get hot water for the boy's feet, his rescuers undressed him and laid him gently on the bed.

"Now," said the mechanic, "my task is no a' done yet; I suppose I maun gang for a doctor."

"O, if ye would! The poor lad's life may be saved."

"Weel, I ken whaur to find the nicest young doctor in a' the toon. So here's for aff."

"It's a good sign," the widow said, as the strange boy began to moan again after she had placed the hot-water bottle at his feet. "I'd rather hear him moanin' like that than lyin' like a deid thing."

The mechanic was back with the doctor in a surprisingly short space of time.

"And now," he said, as he ushered him in, "I maun awa'. My neebour will think me lost."

Colin followed him into the passage.

He tried to force half a crown into his hand, but the young man drew himself proudly back.

"What!" he cried; "tak' payment for an act o' charity and kindness. No a bawbee!"²

"Well," said Colin, feeling a little ashamed, "you must forgive me if I have insulted you."

¹ To-night.

² Halfpenny.

"Nonsense! Puir men like me have to pocket mony an insult, but they're no bound to pocket a penny for lendin' a helpin' han' to creatures in distress. Good-nicht."

"Good-night, and thank you. You'll call to-morrow?"

"That I will."

And the Good Samaritan was gone.

Colin returned to the bed-room. The surgeon was already busy at work, and had inserted two stitches in the brow. Colin looked wonderingly on. He was surprised to see one so young with so cool and collected a manner, and with fingers so lissom and deft. Why, this surgeon could be but a few years older than himself.

Presently the dressing was finished, and as the doctor washed his hands he looked into Colin's face and burst into a merry laugh.

"I'll wager the leg of the gauger," he said, "I can tell what you're thinking about."

"Well, then, guess," said Colin.

"You are wondering what right a young fellow like me has to take a case like this in hand?"

"You are right," said Colin.

"Well, I am young. Barely nineteen. But though I'm only a medical student, I've been out to Greenland in charge of a ship, and I've treated gun-shot wounds, and cut off a frosted hand; and, look you, lad, I could whip off your leg above the knee, tie the arteries, and stitch the flaps all inside of six minutes! What think you of that?"

Colin shuddered rather. He admitted that it would be excessively clever, but said that he was willing to take his word for it, and would much prefer to have the leg where it was.

"But, I say, Dr.—a—a," began Colin.

"I'm neither Dr. A— nor Dr. B—. I'm plain Rudland Syme."

"Well, Rudland, I was going to ask if you thought this poor young fellow would live?"

"Live! Of course he'll live. What's to hinder him? There is a little concussion, and he has lost a drop of blood. But, dear me! that is nothing. He is breathing fairly easy

now. And he has a pulse as strong as a sand-donkey's. To be sure he'll live. Mrs. Jackson, you'll give him a little beef-tea when he can swallow. But nothing stronger. I'm off; see you all to-morrow."

Colin went as far as the gate with him, and could hear the young surgeon singing, even when far up the street. Then he rounded the corner, and Colin heard him no more.

But hardly had the doctor's voice died away in the distance than, from the other end of the street, came the sound of another voice, also raised in song.

It was a song of a different calibre though, and the throat was of a different calibre also. There was the true ring of the sea in that song, if ever Colin had heard it. It was a song that breathed of the brine and the breeze, and there were notes in it that seemed to have been caught from the wild sea-mews themselves, and from curling waves that on nights of storm go shrieking past a ship, their white tops curling high above the swaying bulwarks.

"Here, a sheer hulk, lies poor Tom Bowling,
The darling of our crew;
No more he'll hear the tempest howling,
For Death has broached him to.
His form was of the manliest beauty,
His heart was kind and soft,
Faithful below he did his duty,
But now he's gone aloft,
But, now he's gone aloft."

By the time the singer—who was somewhat tall and very squarely built, so far as Colin could see in the moonlight—had sung the last line twice over, he had reached the gate.

"Hullo! my lad, and who are you? And where do you hail from?"

"O, if you please, sir, I'm Colin M'Ivor from the Highland hills, and I've brought a string of mountain trout for your supper."

"Brave boy! Why, you've come in the nick of time. Well, come inside, and you shall sit beside me and share the string of mountain trout."

CHAPTER II.

CAPTAIN JUNK OF THE "BLUE PETER"

"A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad tires in a mile-a!"

NO doubt my reader has seen the back of an old Cremona fiddle, and he also knows the colour of a well-burned brick. Well, if you were to ask me to describe Uncle Tom's complexion I should get easily out of it by telling you it was just a shade betwixt the two.

It would have been next to impossible to have told Uncle Tom's exact age as he sat at table there, he himself laughing and making everybody else laugh, while ever and anon he transfixes another mountain trout with his steel-pronged fork. He might have been five and forty, or he might have been but little over thirty.

He was Widow Jackson's brother, and had not been home from sea for two long years, so what with the anxiety of waiting up for him so long, and the excitement and delight of seeing him, and one thing and another, I believe the little lady was half inclined to be a trifle hysterical over the situation. For she laughed and laughed till her eyes filled with tears, then she told her brother she felt half inclined to cry.

"Why should you pipe your eye, my dear old girl? Why, Mary, woman, this world was never made for tears. I declare to you, Mary, that if I wasn't far better engaged discussing these delicious mountain trout, I'd sing you a song. You know, dear, my motto was always this: 'Be cheerful'.

"A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad tires in a mile-a!"

It will easily be perceived that Uncle Tom was a sailor of the good old school—the easy-going, happy-go-lucky school of seamen that never meet dangers nor difficulties half-way,

but are always ready to do battle with them when they do appear. Nor must it be imagined that this sort of sailor has entirely gone out or gone under, or that he lives only in nautical yarns, or on the stage of a twopenny theatre. There are many of them to the fore yet, I can assure you, reader. Yet there may be some slight difference between him and the Tom-Cringle's-Log sailor or the Jack Tar of Marryat's novels. He does not nowadays as a rule "shiver his timbers", or "dash his jib", and he is not constantly hitching up his wide trousers and turning his quid in his mouth. But he is all there just the same; good-natured to a degree, always willing at any self-sacrifice to do a kind turn for a messmate or a fellow-creature of any sort; loving his duty for duty's sake, and quite as ready to leap overboard in half a gale of wind to save a man's life, as to swing himself into his hammock when his watch comes below.

I have said that he would leap overboard to save a man's life —yes, but I have known a sailor of this kind leap into the sea to save the skipper's cat. This happened, I may tell you, out in the east coast of Africa, and it is but fair to add that superstition might have had something to do with it, for the cat was a huge black one, scarcely even a favourite with the men, any more than was the skipper himself, and he was a sea-tyrant. All honour to Fred Newburgh, nevertheless, for his brave deed, for in those blue seas sharks abound, and they are never far away from a ship. Usually three attach themselves to each vessel with the avowed object of doing the scavenging. This they do most effectually, grabbing at and swallowing almost everything that is thrown overboard, or falls overboard. No matter what it may be, it is their perquisite, a ham bone, an old blacking brush, or a soda-water bottle. Everything goes down, its digestibility is a matter for future consideration, and I am of opinion that such things as bottles and pieces of hard wood or cork are afterwards ejected. At the same time these sharks have tastes. There was one I used to feed almost daily. He used to look up at me with his sly evil eye in a languishing kind of way meant to betoken gratitude and affection.

"I love you, doctor," he seemed to say, "O, dearly. And

I love salt beef. But, dear doc, I'd much prefer a leg of your loblolly boy, if you could spare him."

The loblolly boy was my boy Green, who spread the plasters—he always burned them—and swept out the dispensary, invariably breaking a bottle or two. I did not hold that boy in high esteem, and could have spared him easily, only I did not think it quite the correct thing to drop him down to a shark.

But about Fred Newburgh and the skipper's cat. A couple of boats were speedily lowered, and there was a race towards Fred, who was far, far astern. The skipper having shouted that he would present a guinea to the winning boat's crew who saved the cat—he didn't mention Fred. Well, Fred was picked up. He was laughing, and the cat on his shoulder was grinning.

"Weren't you afraid of the sharks, Fred?" said a messmate that same evening at tea-time.

Fred loved a joke, and could spin a good yarn, so he answered as follows:

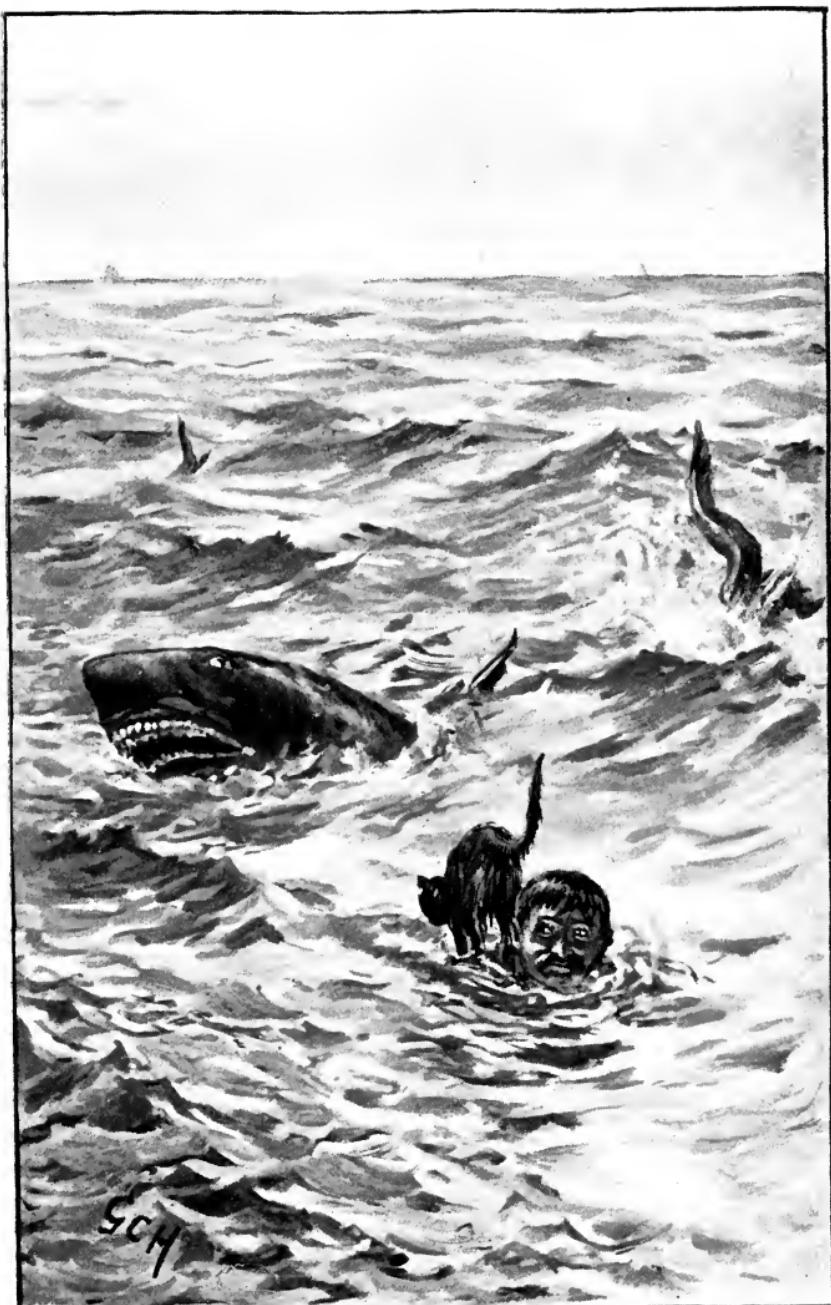
"Well, matie, it was like this, just. There was I swimming away easy, merely enough to keep my old hull above water, and there was the tom-cat on my shoulder, and there alongside was one of the biggest and ugliest sharks ever you seen. Pass the sugar, matie."

"And didn't he try to seize you, Fred?"

"Several times, matie, but, bless your innocent soul, every time he raised his ugly snout above the water, 'Fiss!' cried the cat, and struck out with a will, and off went Master Shark with a rush and a run; and the play proceeded like that all the time till the boat came, and Tom and I were luggered out of the briny. So you see, matie, the cat and I are kind o' square, because if I saved his life, he saved mine."

This yarn of Fred's has to be swallowed with more than a grain of salt. I think it will need a drop of vinegar as well.

Now, Jones was Uncle Tom's name, and it is one that most of us have heard before. However, he was never called Jones by any of his crew, or even by his officers, when they



"EVERY TIME HE RAISED HIS UGLY SNOUT, 'FISS!'
CRIED THE CAT."

were not addressing him face to face. He was invariably spoken of as Captain Junk. This in itself, I think, proves that he was a thorough old salt. He had entered the merchant service when a mere lad, or rather child, of twelve years of age. He had run away to sea in the old fashion, been brought back; ran away a second, and even a third time; and after this his people, finding it impossible to strain any more against his strong self-will, apprenticed him to a brig. This old Dutch-built "dug-out" used to sail down the Mediterranean, and terrible weather she did make sometimes. Tom's parents had been induced to place him in this vessel in the hope that he might soon tire of

"A life on the ocean wave,
And a home on the rolling deep,"

and run home to be forgiven.

Tom did nothing of the sort. He had the grit in him, as the snuffy old man who commanded the brig told Tom's father. The young sailor took all his hardships as a matter of course. He heard the older sailors grumbling and growling at everything, as older sailors will, but young Tom only looked on and said nothing. The sailors said sulkily that the biscuits were too hard and much too weevilly, though they didn't mind a fair share of weevils; that, on the other hand, the pork was too soft and too blue. Pork fat shouldn't be blue, they said, though they didn't mind it being "highish". The salt beef was as old as the hills of Jamaica, and of such consistency that when boiled and cold again it was easy to cut little boats out of it, to be sold as charms to the natives of Greece when they got there. Then the ship was wet; she dipped her head under water in rough weather, and sulked and kept it there for five minutes at a time, although the green seas were tumbling down the fore-hatch like a waterfall; and the sails were rotten and also the sheets; and as for the snuffy old skipper,—why didn't he go to Davy Jones and be done with it?

But young Tom took all this in good part. Moreover, he knew his duty, and learned quickly. Indeed, he was like a monkey in the rigging.

But for all his willingness, he used to get a rope's-ending now and then, and this also he took in good part, and as a portion of the day's work. He never did kick and howl as some "she-boys" do, but just lowered his brows, pursed up his lips, and bore it as well as he could.

The snuffy old skipper took to Tom at last. A miserable-looking creature this skipper was, but clever. So he asked Tom if he wouldn't like to study navigation in the cabin itself. Tom was delighted, and the skipper himself superintended his studies. The boy began to think that this curious little man was not so very objectionable after all—bar the snuff. But this fell over everything, his waistcoat, the table-cloth, and the books. He had both his vest pockets lined with india-rubber, and both were always kept filled with brown rappee, while he used to help himself with both hands at the same time.

"Hah!" he would chuckle, as Tom looked wonderingly at the performance. "Makes you open your eyes, don't it? Well, I've two nostrils, two hands, and two pockets, why shouldn't I save time? Eh? Hah, hah!"

For four years Tom had sailed with this queer old skipper, and then a terrible thing happened. They had been down the Mediterranean, and went next on a voyage to Madeira. Whether they had caught cholera there or not it is impossible to say. But at all events they had not left the place two days before that fearful plague broke out with great virulence.

The brig was bearing up for Gibraltar, and the wind was high and somewhat against her. She made dismal weather for days. Meanwhile her crew were dying fast. But the first to succumb was the snuffy old skipper himself. Then the second mate, then hand after hand, till only three were left alive in the brig.

Then ensued sufferings such as few old sailors have ever come through. The plague was stayed, it is true, but the wind was still fierce, and the waves were houses high. Several square sails were blown to ribbons—a good thing perhaps, for they could not have shortened them or taken them in; so they were simply left to rattle in the breeze,

making a noise like volleys of platoon-firing. The trysail could be easily managed, so could the jibs, but in three days' time the mate,—who was one of the three the plague had spared,—was nearly worn out, and this made poor young Tom's duties all the more onerous.

The mate, too, took to drinking rum, to keep him up, as he averred. Oh, the foolish, foolish fellow, it only made him stupid and useless!

Tom was at the wheel one night. A dark and dismal night it was, for although it was the month of May the sky was densely overcast, and there was neither moon nor stars behind the racing clouds. The man was forward on the outlook, and the ship was running easily and briskly enough, for such an old tub, before the wind, which was favourable at last, when suddenly it appeared to be gray daylight all at once. If the truth must be told, the lad had fallen asleep at the wheel, and no wonder. But he felt refreshed now, and hungry; so he shouted to the mate, who was lying curled up on the leeside of the quarter-deck, to come and take his trick at the wheel.

There was no reply.

Hearing Tom singing out, the seaman ran aft.

"Wake the mate," said Tom.

The man bent down and shook the first officer by the shoulder. Then he stood up with a puzzled look on his face, but grinning nevertheless.

"Why, lad," he said, "the mate's as cold and stiff as the mainstay!"

It was too true! He was dead.

That same day the boy Tom went aloft, for the wind had lulled. He had not been up more than a few minutes before he shouted:

"Land! land!"

It was a glorious sound that! The weary man at the helm regained courage, and almost wept for joy.

But their sufferings were not yet at an end, for the wind rose again towards sundown, and how that worn and weakly man with the boy Tom managed to get their brig into Gibraltar was more than either could ever tell. But

they did. Ah! what is it a British sailor can't do when he tries?

There was not a newspaper in England that had not a paragraph about the adventure, and when Tom got home at last he found himself somewhat more of a hero than he desired to be. However, a well-known firm of shipping people sent for the lad, who at that time was terribly shy, and offered him a midshipman's berth in a good ship.

He did not remain a midshipman very long; in fact, wearing dandy clothes was not much in Tom's line, but he was that sort of lad who could conquer self when duty bade him. He soon passed for second mate, and in time for first mate with a master mariner's certificate.

He worked up and up, steadily and fairly, and before he was thirty was in command of a bran-new sailing ship that was nearly all his own. Some years afterwards his partner died, and Captain Junk, as we may now and then call him, found himself in a position to buy up the other shares.

The vessel, though not very large, was full-rigged and clipper-built. She had been baptized the *Rex*. Tom never liked this name; he was, like most sailors, just a trifle superstitious, and *Rex* could be spelt *Wrecks*; so he determined to re-baptize her.

Now the pilots had called the ship the *Blue Peter*, because she stayed such a short time in port. In fact she had no sooner discharged her cargo than the *Blue Peter*, or sailing flag, was up again.

When it came to Captain Junk's ears that his brave ship was nicknamed the *Blue Peter* he laughed, for it pleased him well.

"It shows what an active pair we are," he told his mate, "me and my old ship" (it will be noted that Captain Junk was not over-grammatical in his English at times). "So, bother my wig, if she sha'n't be baptized the *Blue Peter*."

And the very next day the ceremony was performed, an old maiden lady who lived in Leith having kindly consented to break the bottle of wine, and name the clipper.

This lady was dressed for the occasion all in white and blue, and very much younger than her years.

"I do believe, you know," said Uncle Tom that night in his sister's house, but addressing Colin, "that the old thing was setting her cap at me. She was dressed like a girl of fifteen, but, bless you, boy, she was all skink—just like the scrag-end of a leg of veal, you know. But I gave a splendid luncheon down below, then I told off my mate to take Miss Stivers home."

"You might have gone yourself," said Widow Jackson.

Uncle Tom had finished his supper, and was seated in the easy-chair smoking.

He waved his hand in front of him to clear his sight before he exclaimed :

"Me, sister! Me go home with a young lady or old maid! Why, bother my wig, Mary, she might have proposed to me in the cab, and—I should have been far too good-natured to say her nay. No, no, sister; a sailor needs no wife save his ship. And I have my own bonnie *Blue Peter*."

"I suppose," said Colin, "you have been everywhere in the world, sir?"

"Well, I wouldn't like to say that, you know, but I've seen a good deal of it."

It must not be supposed that the wounded stranger was being neglected while Uncle Tom was having supper, a chat, and a smoke. No, he was being carefully tended by Katie herself, whom her uncle had bidden good-night to, thinking she was going off to bed, for Mrs. Jackson had determined to say nothing to her brother to-night about Colin's adventure on the Links.

Captain Junk was exceedingly tender-hearted, more especially towards boys; and the knowledge that a poor lad, wounded almost to death, was lying under the same roof with him would have kept him awake all night. Or rather, I should say, all the morning, for it was already verging on four o'clock.

Presently Uncle Tom (*N.B.—*I must reserve to myself the right to call him either Uncle Tom or Captain Jones or Junk as it suits me or my story) pulled an immensely large gold watch from his pocket; then started up.

"I declare, sister," he cried, "it has long gone seven bells in the middle watch. I'll turn in at once."

He might have said "half-past three" instead of "seven bells". Your very modern sailor would have spoken thus, but Tom would have considered such a way of talking mere affectation, an impudent aping of landsmen on shore.

"Come, Colin, where do you hang out to-night?"

"I've slung him a hammock in your room, Tom. I thought you wouldn't mind."

"Wouldn't mind, sister? Why, I'll be delighted."

Colin had a new experience that night. He had never slept in a hammock before. He managed to wriggle in all right; but shortly after, he thought he would alter his position and ease it. Well, the alteration was speedily a *fait accompli*, though I have my doubts about the easedom, for as soon as he turned partly round, the hammock did the rest, and landed him on the deck—I should say floor—with all the bed-clothes and pillows on top of him.

Uncle Tom, who was just getting into bed, laughed heartily at Colin's mishap, but he helped him into his hammock again, tucked him in, and told him how he must lie for comfort and safety.

Then he said, "Good-night, and pleasant dreams".

In two minutes more both Colin and Uncle Tom were as sound asleep as a pair of humming-tops.

CHAPTER III.

A LAD FROM THE LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN.

MISS DEWAR'S house was in Union Street and pretty far out towards the West end—towards the Free Church College. It therefore occupied a position of considerable respectability. With its tall stone steps leading up to it, its polished ebony-like door, glittering brass knocker and bell-pull, and its great curtained windows, it

was called by street boys "a grand, grand hoose wi' mebbe a ghost intill't"¹, and looked up to with a species of awe.

The early sweep, who came up the street shouting "Bee—eep! bee—eep! beep! beep!" long before seven o'clock, always lowered his voice when he came near Miss Dewar's mansion. The carter who sold coals by the sackful, and in less respectable neighbourhoods cried "Coals! coals! coal—loal—loal—oals!" at the top of his voice drove silently past Miss Dewar's.

The sand-boy with cart and cuddy never stopped to invite business here, unless beckoned to by one of the smartly-capped female domestics. The grocer's man always put on his cleanest apron when bringing purchases to this house. The burly policeman never permitted noisy boys to play marbles in front of it, and when the postman arrived he ran up the granite steps on tiptoe, and instead of knocking gently rang the bell, because it communicated with the kitchen. But none of these men were forgotten at Christmas-time, and I am not sure, indeed, that their exemplary conduct was not regulated by a kind of prescience, that this festive season did really come once a year.

Was Miss Dewar's house, then, one of the severely genteel sort?

Oh, no, not in the least. And Miss Dewar herself was a very pleasant person indeed. She was an old maid—she frankly confessed to being so—but one of the nice kind. She did not mind telling people that she was five-and-thirty, and I feel quite sure that if the lady had been five-and-forty the information would have been equally at the disposal of her friends.

She was neither scraggy and lean nor too stout, she had bright blue eyes, a rose in each cheek, teeth like pearls—oh, yes, they really were her own—and dark hair, with a silver thread or two about the temples, and surmounted always by a tiny net cap of great neatness.

There really was no nonsense nor humbug about Miss Dewar.

"Well, Miss Dewar," said her friend Mrs. M'Arthur one

¹ In it.

evening at a tea party that the old maid was giving, "I'm sure it puzzles me why you never married."

Miss Dewar laughed lightly and amusedly as she made reply:

"Why, my dear Mrs. M'Arthur, it isn't a woman's privilege to marry, but to be married; it isn't her privilege to ask, but to be asked. Perhaps," she added, with a little sigh, as she took up the dainty white china teapot, "if the right man had come at the right time. Pass your cup, Mrs. M'Arthur."

"Well," said Mrs. Mac, feeling perhaps a little sorry she had given her friend cause to sigh, "you are, no doubt, just as well as you are. The married life isn't all strawberries and cream."

"Indeed that is true!" said another lady.

But Miss Dewar's life at all events seemed a very happy and contented one, and it was certainly peaceful enough. She kept up a daily round of visits nevertheless, and few dinner parties among the good people of the town were considered altogether complete if Miss Dewar was not there.

The young men, and young maidens as well, used to consult her on all kinds of matters, and if a girl were going to be married Miss Dewar very frequently had a hand, or an eye and voice, in the choosing the trousseau. So, on the whole, she was the person nobody would have liked to have missed seeing.

The doctor, even, used to send her upon errands of mercy, which she gladly took in hand, and the minister often asked her advice on matters connected with the church.

Old maids are often called fussy and particular. There was nothing of this sort about Miss Dewar. Old maids frequently have cats and parrots as pets. Miss Dewar's taste lay in another direction. At the time our story commences she had just come into possession of a splendid Landseer Newfoundland. To be sure, he was barely twelve months old, and hardly so well-mannered as he might have been, but a right good heart gazed out through his hazel eyes, and his mistress had determined to take every pains with his education.

He was already of immense size, and would be bigger. His white legs were very massive, he had paws like a young bear, white and black as to body, and with a tasteful blaze adown his forehead. He was what would have been called in a collie dog bawsint-faced.

I think that Caesar thoroughly loved and appreciated his gentle mistress, and had made a vow to himself that he would do all in his power to become a good dog and a respectable member of society. If he did make such a vow he certainly kept it, though, of course, this is only my way of telling you that he turned out a very obedient and clever dog indeed, as his future history will tend to prove.

Now, about eleven o'clock on the day after Colin's strange adventure, who should run up the granite steps of Miss Dewar's mansion but Colin himself. His aunt had seen him coming, for her favourite seat was by the window, and just outside hung a mirror, in which she could note everything that was going on even a long way down the street.

So she ran to open the door to him, and was there before even Jane herself, smart though that tidy little servant maiden was.

She was positively glad to see him. She held out both hands to him, and welcomed him in right heartily. No, she did not kiss him. The fact is that people in Scotland are not so fond of saluting in this way as they are in England, and I am very glad of it.

You could have noted at a glance, however, that Colin was a favourite here. Annie, the handmaiden, had a nod and a smile for him, and he had a nod and a kind word for Annie. Before he got inside a dark gray cat came and rubbed herself against his leg, and when he entered the room Cæsar, the Landseer Newfoundland, jumped up from the bearskin rug on which he had been lying, put his two great paws on Colin's shoulder, nearly pulling him down. Then he started for a run, a habit these dogs have. There was little room, however, even in Miss Dewar's big drawing-room for a wild and excited dog of Cæsar's size to stretch his legs and allay his excitement. But the door was open, so out he bolted; downstairs to the basement he ran, upstairs

again, up and up as far as the attics, here he turned on the landing and came thundering down once more, and at such a pace that the marvel was he didn't break his neck. Into the drawing-room now, twice round it at the gallop, then out again and up and downstairs again. This mad game he continued until he was fain to lie down and pant.

"And how are you, my dear boy? And how is your uncle and aunt? And when did you come? And—"

"Wait, wait, auntie; I couldn't even remember so many questions all at once. Let me try, though. First and foremost, I'm jolly, and Aunt M'Ivor is jolly, and uncle is jollier, and—and—what was the other question, Auntie Dewar?"

"When did you come? This morning, of course?"

"Well—well, I believe it must have been this morning. But I don't think that much of the morning had gone, for I remember that one o'clock struck while I was sitting astride of a gun in Castlegate talking to John Jackson, the bobby."

"Boy, boy, you speak riddles. Come, seat yourself on the ottoman and give a proper account of yourself."

"Well, Auntie Dewar, I have such a lot to tell that I think I had better begin at the beginning, and go straight through my wonderful and adventurous tale."

While Colin is talking to his aunt, we may as well return to Constitution Street.

Captain Junk didn't get up very early, but he ate a hearty breakfast when he did turn out. Then he was told about the wounded boy, and on tiptoe went straight away to see him.

Now, captains of ships like the one which this honest sailor commanded don't carry doctors as a rule—that is, not unless they have forty souls on board all told. So, very often, they have to be captains and doctors as well. They are supplied with a medicine chest and a mariner's guide thereto, and it is needless to say that they just as frequently give the wrong medicine as the right one. But as regards wounds, bruises, fractures, and dislocations, they are usually pretty handy.

So, as he approached the bedside where the boy lay quiet and still, Captain Junk assumed quite a professional air. He took the boy's wrist to feel his pulse, and pulled out his big chronometer of a watch to consult as he did so. Then he touched the lad's cheek with the back of his brown hand, listened for a moment to his breathing, then, beckoning to his sister, left the room on tiptoe just as he had entered it.

Widow Jackson was overawed by her brother's assumption of professional knowledge. Even the young doctor himself had not impressed her half so much.

"Will he die?" she whispered, when they were once more out on the landing.

"Die, sister? Never a die till his day comes, and that won't be for a while yet, if we can manage aright. His pulse is normal."

"Is that a good sign or a bad, brother?"

"Good, of course. His breathing is pretty regular—just a trifle of a hitch in it, as one would naturally expect. But his skin is warm and moist. He'd do, but for one thing, sister."

"Tell me, Tom, and I'll send to the druggist's for it at once."

"The druggist doesn't keep it. I mean fresh air. That room is too small. To keep the window constantly open might endanger his life. You see, sis, the boy has been a sailor, I think, young as he is—well, he won't do with stuffiness, so—— Listen!"

It was the sound of the iron gate, a rat-tat-tat at the door, and a bold young voice trolling out some lines of the old song:

"Come where my love lies dreaming,
Dreaming the happy hours away."

The door was opened.

"Hello, Katie! how is the patient? Has he spoken yet?" and then hardly waiting for an answer, the young doctor, for it was he, began to whistle; and then he came trotting upstairs.

Certainly not a very dignified, nor a very professional way, of entering a patient's house.

"So glad you've come, sir!" said the widow.

"So am I. How's the lad?"

He did not wait for a reply, but went straight in, not on tiptoe.

"So—ho," he said after a slight examination. "He is doing well."

He lifted first one eyelid and then another. Then he went and lit a candle, and repeated the examination of the eyes, drawing the candle away and approaching it to the boy's face several times.

"Beautiful!" he said. "He'll talk this afternoon. Or he would if—why, you had better open the window."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Uncle Tom. "Didn't I tell you so, Mary? Didn't I tell you so?"

"Are you the boy's father, sir?"

"No, I'm nobody's father as yet. I'm Jones, master mariner. They call me Junk for short. Captain Junk, of the *Blue Peter*, at your service, young sir. But I am entirely of your way of thinking; the lad wants a few more cubic feet of air."

"Well—" the doctor began.

Rat, tat, tat, tat. Once more the knocker was being briskly plied, and Katie came running into the room, pushing her hair back behind her ears.

"O, mither!" she cried.

"Fat [what] is't, lassie?"

"O, a carriage and pair!"

"Weel, rin doon and open the door to the gentle folks."

A minute afterwards Colin himself ran upstairs.

"She wouldn't hear of anything else," he began. "My aunt, I mean," seeing his audience looked puzzled. "She says that if the lad can be lifted at all he must be conveyed in the landau to her house, where he will have every attention and care; and she says also, Captain Jones, that she would like very much to see you."

"See me; but—how did—"

"O, of course, I told her all about you. Now what answer, doctor, shall I give my aunt?"

"I will call myself this evening after I have seen my patient again, but I think it can be managed."

Two days after this Olaf Ranna, for that was the unfortunate boy's name, was comfortably ensconced in one of the very largest bed-rooms in Kilmorrack House—the residence of Miss Dewar was thus named—and there he was tenderly nursed by Uncle Tom and little Katie; while Miss Dewar herself glided in and out at any time, but as silently as a ghost might have done.

The lady was really in her element; she had got some one to nurse, and there was, moreover, a spice of mystery and romance about the case such as she confessed she dearly loved.

Yes, Olaf had spoken. He had told his name, but could as yet give no very coherent account of himself; only he frequently whispered the words "Sigurd" and "Inverness". Then he would doze off again, so that the young doctor was, on the whole, somewhat anxious about him.

He might, so he told Miss Dewar, take a turn for the better at any moment—or a turn for the worse. In order that the noise and rattle of passing carts and carriages might not fall upon the wounded lad's ears, his hostess had the street covered some distance up and down with refuse from the tan-yards. It must be confessed, therefore, that Olaf Ranna had fallen among good Samaritans from the very first.

And thanks to all the capital nursing he received, and all the attention from young "Doctor" Rudland Syme—really he deserves the courtesy of the appellation, albeit it would be a long time yet ere he could assume the title as a right—Olaf was soon out of danger.

Rudland was in no hurry to pass for doctor, he told Captain Junk, adding that he might possibly take another voyage to sea, to America or Greenland or somewhere before passing, for he had plenty of time as far as age was concerned.

Now that his brow was healing beautifully, and every particle of swelling was gone from his eyes, and he could

sit up in bed, and smile, and talk, Olaf turned out to be a good-looking and bright lad.

Of course, he had a story to tell, and one evening he was permitted to tell it. There was nobody there but Uncle Tom, Colin, Katie, and Miss Dewar. Rudland had promised to come, but was doubtless detained somewhere.

"And now, dear child," said Miss Dewar, as she folded her hands on her black silk apron, "we are all wishing to hear your story. Even honest Cæsar there is all attention."

It really did seem so, for the great dog was leaning his monster head on the boy's bed, and looking into his face with those speaking hazel eyes of his, as if he knew every word that was being spoken, and was only waiting to hear more.

"Story, Miss Dewar?" said Olaf, with a faint smile. "Then I am truly sorry, because I have none to tell."

"O, but you have, boy. You are, we know, a Norwegian. Then how came you to speak English so well?"

This gave Olaf a commencement.

"O, you know, Miss Dewar, my mother is English, at least she is Scotch. Her father's home is near Inverness. We often stay there in summer, and there I have been to school."

"And your father?"

"O, poor father died some—many years ago. He was captain of a Norwegian sealing and whaling ship. Dear Miss Dewar—" there were tears now in the lad's blue eyes, and seeing this evidence of grief, kind-hearted Uncle Tom said "Poor boy! poor lad!" and patted the pale hand that lay outside the coverlet—"Dear Miss Dewar, father was killed by an ice-bear while out shooting on the pack ice."

He paused for a moment, then resumed his brief narrative.

"I have sometimes thought, since coming to my senses, that, having been to Greenland, Dr. Rudland Syme might have known my father."

"O, no, no," said Miss Dewar. "Dismiss that idea from your head. Rudland was out only quite recently."

"Well," said Olaf, "I'm very stupid as yet, but after father's death, mother could not bear to live in Norway for years, so we came to Scotland, but father's house was not sold. It is still kept up. I go often there now, and mother has been sometimes. I dearly love Norway—its dales and glens, its hills and mountains, its dark and gloomy fjords, ay, and its great snow plains,—and I am going back soon. You know, Miss Dewar, I and Sigurd Walsen came over here to Aberdeen in our little yacht?"

"Yes, boy, and who is Sigurd?"

"O, Sigurd is the bravest and the cleverest man in the world, Miss Dewar. He was my father's third officer or spectioneer. He was with father when the awful ice-bear struck him down, and although Sigurd had nothing but a seal club,¹ he attacked the great bear, and after a fearful struggle, wounded him terribly. But, for all that, the bear got away, and after a month, he came back to the ship and killed a boy, but no one could kill or even wound the ice-bear again.

"Poor father was placed in a coffin, and hoisted into the foretop. Three or four months after, Miss Dewar (and I remember that day well), the ship came into the fjord with her flag half-mast. My mother knew then that father was dead, and she was frantic with grief. Our house is built on a brae quite in sight of the sea."

"Dear boy!"

"Well, Miss Dewar, father was frozen, you know, and I could hardly believe he was dead, but only just asleep. Poor father!"

"But Sigurd hasn't gone to sea again, though he will some day, perhaps, but for quite a long time mother couldn't bear him out of her sight, and always would have him talk of father. You see he was a favourite of father's, and nearly always with him. And now Sigurd lives at our house in Norway, and looks after it in mother's absence, except when he is at sea with me in our little yacht."

"Is it a nice yacht?" Colin ventured.

"O no, at least you would hardly call it so; but it has a

¹A kind of pole-axe used for killing seals, and not really a club.

tiny cabin amidships, and on the whole it does well to go fishing cruises in, all around the fjords. Well, we came over here in it. Yes, Miss Dewar, it is a somewhat venturesome voyage, because there were only myself and a boy—I'm sixteen, and a man, though not big—and Sigurd. But I'm never afraid on the stormiest nights when Sigurd is near."

"And where is Sigurd now?"

"Sigurd brought me in here the night of my accident. Then he went away round to Peterhead where he has friends among the seal-fishing people. By this time he must be in Inverness, but I am glad mother doesn't know that I am hurt.

"What did you say, Miss Dewar? Oh, he left me here to have a look at the Granite City, because I had often heard of its wondrous beauty. He took me to our little hotel on the quay where my box is, and at moonrise I went out to wander by the sea and to take a lunar observation. I had climbed the green hill, and was taking an observation as well as I could, when I was knocked down from behind. I don't know who did it. Yes, I had a splendid watch. It was father's. And I had a purse, but there was but a few pounds in that. So I have not lost much, except the watch. I'd like to see that again!"

"Well," said Colin, "John Jackson assures me he will do all he can to find it. He says he has put Tam Gibb, the detective, on the track, and that Tam will recover it if it be in the city, and find the thieves too."

Olaf now lay back somewhat wearily, and Miss Dewar made haste to get him some nourishing refreshment, after which he dozed off, and Colin sat by his bedside to watch.

A score of strange but pleasant thoughts kept running through Colin's head as he sat there. This boy Olaf then was a year older than himself, though ever so much smaller. But he seemed very brave and intelligent. How he (Colin) would like to run over to Norway with Olaf in his little yacht! He felt sure enough that his uncle would allow him to do so.

"How would it do," he said to himself, "to take Olaf up home with me to the Highlands to begin with? Yes, I

will do it. Uncle M'Ivor will make him heartily welcome. I shall write about it this very evening."

And so he did, and we shall presently see what came of it.

CHAPTER IV.

COME, my laddie, come and bring your new-found friend. One breath of our mountain air will do him more good than a bottle of doctor's physic."

The letter altogether was not a long one, and the above short sentence gives the gist of it.

Colin's father had been Laird M'Ivor's favourite brother. He had been a younger brother, and like a good many younger brothers among the upper ten of Highland society, had chosen to go on the war-path, considering it far more honourable than the country house or advocate's office. He had married when still young, and then died sword in hand fighting the Russians on a blood-stained hillside in the Crimea.

Laird M'Ivor, who had no children of his own, gladly threw his doors open to the poor young widow and her child. She lived many years in this Highland home, then "wore away" as Scotch people expressively put it.

Well, if Colin had been spoiled, as some said, before his poor mother's death, he was spoiled still more when that gentle lady was gone.

But I do not like the expression "spoiled" applied to any hero of mine, and what is more, I won't have it. Colin M'Ivor, I say boldly, was one of those boys whom kindness will not spoil. It is because such lads have sensitive souls, and because in those souls kindness begets gratitude instead of selfishness, that they cannot be spoiled.

A boy of this kind—would that there were more of them!

—is worth a king's ransom. A right-thinking man cannot behold or consider such a boy without something akin to awe and reverence. He is almost fresh from the hands of his Maker, contact with a sinful and deceitful world has not yet sullied his soul. Perhaps the angels that guard him shall keep him pure in the midst of sin, perhaps they will cause sin to be abhorrent to him instead of alluring him, so that he shall grow up a pure-minded, brave, justice-loving man, and men like this are indeed the salt of the earth.

No. Colin was not a spoiled boy by any means, and yet, as he told John Jackson, the policeman, on that night he was found astride of the gun, everybody permitted him to do pretty much as he pleased.

Young M'Ivor had been, up till very lately, at the parish school of Glen Albin.

In Highland parishes like that where Laird M'Ivor dwelt, the parish school may well be called a classical school. There may be two, you know—one connected with the Free Church, the other with the Established Church of Scotland, and both are good. It was to the latter Colin had belonged. The teacher was a hard-working, most industrious young fellow called Stewart, and a great favourite and almost constant companion of the minister of the parish, at whose manse he frequently dined. And Stewart took a very great interest in Colin. He had him learning not only Latin, but Greek, before he was nine years of age, so that now at the age of fifteen this boy might easily have entered the university, and might have even won a bursary.¹

Colin's uncle had proposed that he should do so. The lad had looked at him for a few moments in silence, but rather sadly.

“Wouldn't you like to?” said his uncle.

“I was thinking—”

“Well, think away. I'll give you a whole night to think it out.”

“No, no, uncle. I'll do it now.”

“Well, then, wouldn't you like a 'varsity education?”

“What would it end in my becoming?”

¹ A scholarship is so called in Scotland.

"O, lots of fine things would be at your choosing if you stuck to your studies."

"Mention some, uncle."

"Well, first and best comes the church. Just think what a nice position that is, viewed only from a worldly point of view. There is our Mr. Freeshol here—by the by, he's coming to dine with me to-night—well, look, to begin with, at the fine house he lives in. Why, it is nearly as big as mine. Then look at the nice gardens all round it, and the lawns and shrubbery in front, and look at the glebe or farm, all free, Colin, all free, lad; two pairs of beautiful horses, besides cows and pigs, and fowls and ducks, gabbling geese all in a row, and red-necked turkeys. And all the week long he has nothing to do except to look after his belongings, officiate at a marriage or baptism, or pray with a dying parishioner. And as to his status in life, why a duke hasn't a finer. He is considered fit company for a king. Why, Colin, when Prince Albert came here and wanted to visit the Falls of Moira, it wasn't me he called upon, but Mr. Freeshol, and it wasn't with me he dined, no, it was with the minister.

"And O, Colin, think also of the glory a minister has in winning souls to Christ!"

"Stop, uncle, stop; that is just it. I'm not good enough to win souls to Christ. No, no, I won't be a minister; anything else, uncle."

"Any other career, you mean. Lots, lad. There's the law—"

"O, uncle, I wouldn't be a lawyer for anything. I've been seeing a young fellow in town who is going in for that, and I pitied him. Why, our old turkey-gobbler can roost on a tree and get fresh air; poor Mr. Thompson can't. A dingy, dirty office, a wooden floor, an ink-stained desk, musty ledgers, frowsy parchments, hard words to write and learn, and cobwebs. Faugh!"

"Be a doctor, then, boy."

"No, uncle, no; I couldn't bear to live always among suffering, sickness, grief, and pain. I couldn't physic the cat, and when Harry, the stable-boy, lanced our game cock's

bumble-foot I suffered far more than the cock himself did. I couldn't be a doctor. If I didn't make mistakes and kill my patients, the sight of my patients' sufferings would soon kill me."

"Well, you wouldn't like to be a schoolmaster?"

"No, uncle, I should lose my temper, and should be whacking away all day long with cane and tawse. There would be no time for teaching. Then the bigger boys would mutiny, and I should be locked up all night in the cellar for the rats to eat; there would be nothing left of me in the morning except my knuckle ends and the soles of my boots. No, uncle, I believe I am going to be a sailor, and it doesn't need a 'varsity education to plough the sea."

"Well, perhaps I shall let you plough the sea till you are twenty-one, after that—"

"After that, uncle?"

"Well, you're my heir, you know, and I shall be getting old, and, having learned to plough the sea, you might settle down and learn to plough the land."

"I'll do anything for you, uncle, only don't speak about getting old."

From the above conversation I hope my readers will gather that Colin was anything but a spoiled child.

On the day Colin M'Ivor received that letter from his uncle, Olaf was unusually bright. He was allowed to get up now and come downstairs, and on this particular forenoon he was going for a drive with Miss Dewar. She was going to take him all over the beautiful Granite City.

She, too, had received a letter that morning. It was from Olaf's mother, and this lady was profuse in her thanks for all the kindness that had been bestowed upon her boy. She had not been told, however, how very narrow his escape from death had been.

"What do you think, Auntie Dewar?" said Colin at breakfast.

"I think you are looking unusually happy and bright about something, and I think I should like to know what it means?"

'It means this.'

He handed her his letter. She read it and smiled, and at a nod from Colin gave it to Olaf. As he read it his whole face became lighted up with joy and animation.

"Is it," he said, "that you would take me far to your beautiful home and your wild Aberdeenshire Highlands. O, there is joy in my heart. I will write Sigurd not to come round for me yet—not for a few days."

"A few days!" cried Colin laughing. "Why, a Highland invitation extends over weeks, sometimes over months."

Miss Dewar drove Olaf to see all the lions of both new and old towns; the chief lions, of course, being the universities. Then she took him to the house of a celebrated surgeon—Dr. Pirrie, to wit. This gentleman most carefully examined Olaf.

"Yes," he said, "mountain air will do him much good, and he cannot have too much of it. After that he will be fit for a sea voyage, if his bent lies in that direction."

He himself—the surgeon, I mean, who was a most gentlemanly man—bowed the lady to her carriage, not even permitting her servant to open the door for her.

But Olaf had another surprise that forenoon which gave him great delight. For, as the carriage stopped for a few minutes in Castle Street, near the cross (near the very gun that Colin had been riding when "my son John" found him), the very identical John marched up and saluted.

Colin bent over and shook hands with John.

"Would the young gentlemen come into the office for a few minutes?"

They would only be too delighted if Miss Dewar would permit. Miss Dewar would not only permit, but would go herself. She had never been inside a police office, and had feminine curiosity enough to wonder what such an office was like.

"My son John" bowed them in, and, sitting in a side room at a desk, they found a very tall, well-made, clean-shaven man, who looked like an actor. This was Tam Gibb. He got up and bowed. He was not accustomed to have real ladies come to see him.

"You wanted to see the boys?" said Miss Dewar.

"O, yes, madam. This watch—a large and very valuable gold one, you will observe—was traced by Policeman Jackson, that young man in the doorway, to a pawn-shop up Broad Street."

"O," cried Olaf with sparkling eyes, "it is mine. It is my dear, dead father's watch."

"I am happy to restore it to you," said Tam Gibb.

"How can I ever thank or reward you?" began Olaf.

"By saying nothing about it. Duty is its own reward. Just put it in your pouch,¹ youngster, and take my advice: when next you go star-gazin' on the Broad Hill, don't put a gold watch in your fob."

As he left the office, after the interview, the boy Olaf paused to shake hands with John and thank and praise him for his cleverness. Probably Olaf's thanks assumed a solid form, for John's hand sought his pocket after shaking that of Olaf.

As far as farming was concerned, probably Grant M'Ivor of Glen Albin was neither wiser nor cleverer than any of the other farmers who dwelt in that wild and romantic valley. But he had this advantage, the land he farmed was his own, to hold and to have as long as he lived. How it had been called a glen I am unable to conceive, for though the grand old hills and mountains were everywhere around it, they were at some distance. It was, therefore, a strath or vale, and a very lovely one it must be called. Broad green meadows, waving woods, and smiling farms; a beautiful lake in the centre some miles in extent, and many a wild pass or glen proper opening into it.

Each of these passes brought a brawling brown streamlet to feed the river Uisce, which, after leaving the lake or loch, went meandering gently through a peat morass till it reached the end of the strath. Then, with a series of mad leaps and bounds, called cataracts and waterfalls, it rushed headlong to the plains below, and onward then through many a woodland waving green till it fell into the Dee itself.

¹ Pocket.

There had been many and many a laird at Moira before Grant M'Ivor, and to some considerable extent it seemed that each had exhibited different tastes, as far as architecture was concerned. And perhaps the only portion of the original house that could have been sworn to was the wide and spacious hall, which Grant had converted into a billiard room, and where, on a low hearth, a roaring fire of wood burned nearly all the year round. But wing after wing and gable after gable had been added on, and even a great square tower. This last was very old, and was said to harbour a ghost; but it must have been one of a somewhat retiring disposition, for, with the exception of old Elspet, the housekeeper, and old Murdoch, who combined the duties of butler with those of henchman-in-general, nobody had ever seen the spirit of the tower.

Grant M'Ivor had, however, been content to let the house hang as it had grown. He confined his attentions to outdoor work and beautification—gardens, lawns, walks, and shrubberies, were his chief delight, and the grand old brown-stemmed pine-trees that elevated their heads almost as high as the tower itself.

So, on the whole Moira was not only a beautiful but a very quaint kind of a mansion, all the more so in that it occupied a position on a terraced height at the head of the strath.

Fifteen miles from a station. That did not signify in the least. I do not think that anyone in the glen ever longed to be a bit nearer to the roar of the iron wheels and the shriek of the engine whistle. The farmers had their gigs and their dog-carts, the laird had carriages to drive and horses to ride, while the poorer folks, when they chose to make a pilgrimage from home, which was seldom, drove their own pair, the same that Adam and Eve made use of—their legs.

Had Colin been coming to Moira all by himself he would have laughed at the idea of his uncle sending a carriage to the railway station to meet him. But he had friends. He had not only Olaf, who was now nearly well, but bold Captain Junk also. Captain Junk's ship, the saucy *Blue Peter*, was

snug in Leith harbour, and, knowing that he could trust his mate, the skipper had given himself a month's holiday till the ship should be loaded up. Colin had not said a word to his uncle about his intention of bringing his old sailor friend with him.

"You'll have a hearty Highland welcome," he told him, "and it will be a surprise and a pleasant one, too, for my Uncle M'Ivor."

Ah! but Uncle M'Ivor had prepared a surprise for the boys, and a pleasant one it was certain to be, as far as Olaf was concerned.

When, therefore, the carriage drew up at the hall-door, after a drive that delighted the young Norwegian beyond measure, so different were those crimson heath-clad hills and braes to anything he had ever seen in his own country, the second person, if not the first, to bid Olaf welcome was —his own mother.

"Why, mother, am I awake or am I dreaming?"

It had been a pretty thought this of the old laird's to have Olaf's mother sent for in order to meet him. And I do believe that her companionship did almost as much to restore him to perfect health as the bracing mountain air itself. Be this as it may, Olaf grew stronger every day and hour almost, and was soon able to accompany Colin on long delightful fishing excursions on the loch or adown the river's banks.

As for Uncle Grant and Captain Junk, they became very much engrossed in each other indeed. They were constantly out-of-doors together, or on the hills with their guns, and after dinner every evening in company with Mrs. M'Ivor, the laird's wife, and Mrs. Ranna, Olaf's mother, they enjoyed a delightful rubber at whist. The boys did not think the evenings long, for, when they were tired playing chequers or draughts, they could read to each other or talk.

Olaf had travelled quite a deal in his own country, and Colin was never tired of listening to his stories of that wild land, where, in days of old, the Vikings used to dwell.

Olaf was an excellent tale-teller, and, being slightly imbued with superstition, he could give full lingual force to

the strange traditions that hang around the fjords, and vales, and waterfalls, as the morning mists hang around the mountain's brow.

Fishing did not, however, absorb all their daylight amusements; and I do not think that boys could ever weary at a country house where there were ponies, dogs, and other live stock. And here at Moira there was plenty of every species of domestic animal clad in hair, in feathers, or in fur.

There was one Shetland pony who was undoubtedly the daftest little scamp ever seen in the strath. There was no end to his tricks or to his fun. The fact is, that Colin had had the training of him, and the pony would run after him like a dog, and, with the dogs, follow him afar to the hills, and so, when tired of walking, he could ride home. Bareback, however. Frolic didn't mind bridle and bit, but he vowed he would never be saddled. But this had not signified much to Colin, who had a good knee-grip, nor did it signify much to Olaf, whom Frolic graciously permitted to ride him.

Colin often rode Frolic right into the great hall with half a dozen dogs—collies, deerhounds, and sky-terriers—at his heels. Round and round the billiard-table the wild pack would fly, with many a bark and whoop, then out again, and off down the glen like the wind itself. This caper always delighted the old laird, though it did not improve the floor of the hall, but then Frolic was but lightly shod.

This daft pony used sometimes even to follow Colin into the drawing-room. But here he never behaved wildly. He seemed overawed by all the *bric-a-brac* he saw around him, and kept on his company manners.

Moreover, Colin had taught this pony many droll tricks. He had taught him to kneel when told; to lift his feet one at a time, thus executing a kind of dance, and to neigh when asked to; to neigh, or perhaps I should say whinny. Strangely enough, he would do any of his common tricks for a slice of carrot, but he would not neigh under a nut—a Brazil nut without the shell—and he must see it first. A nut or nothing, that was Frolic's motto.

Olaf was a naturalist born, so he took great pleasure not

in Frolic only, but in the horses, and in the cattle. There was one great Highland bull, however, who inhabited a certain field with high stone walls all round, that Olaf would not venture near. He was a bull of very powerful build, though not so high as a short-horn. Jock Towse, as he was called, was a long-horn. Indeed, his horns were longer than your arms, reader, stretched to their greatest extent. The horns were covered as to their points, for they were very sharp, in the same way as are foils used in fencing. His eyes were red and fierce, and his whole body covered with long hair, which on his face and brow was as shaggy as that of a skye-terrier.

Colin was the only one about the place, bar the cow-boy and the laird himself, who could approach Jock Towse with safety. Jock used to run to meet Colin, with his head low to the ground and thundering all the time as bulls do. But it was all fun. Colin walked to meet him, and Jock was so delighted to have his towsy neck scratched and his ears pulled, that he used to lick Colin's hand and even his neck.

Then Colin would say:

"Down head, Jock Towse."

Immediately the great bull would lower his nose to the ground.

Colin would then stand right between the horns with a hand on each. Then he gave the next command.

"Lift, Jock Towse!"

And up the boy went, high in the air.

This performance was repeated about a score of times. After which Jock received a huge piece of bannock,¹ which his soul loved, and Colin kissed him on the muzzle and retired.

The pigs even were a source of pleasure to Olaf, and he became so well acquainted with the breeding sow, that whenever she saw him she used to throw herself down on her side to be scratched with the end of his stick. The languishing look in her almost human-like eyes, and the satisfied grunts she emitted, showed how much she appreciated Olaf's kindness.

¹ A thick oatmeal cake baked on a griddle or iron plate.

I need not say how much the boy delighted in the companionship of the dogs, especially the collies.

"We have no dogs so perfect in Norway," he told Colin, "as these beautiful creatures."

"Perhaps," he added, "they will one day talk."

The barn-yards, as the farm-buildings were called, formed a kind of square, but all was gravel between; not a dunghill like badly-kept farms in England. Around this square fowls and feathered stock of all kinds congregated at sunset to receive some grain before going to roost. They would even wait up till after gloaming if the grain were not sooner forthcoming. Olaf and Colin used, however, to come very regularly each with a bag. If they were from home the feeding devolved on the cow-boy as soon as the fowls appeared in the yard.

Anyone who is narrow-minded enough to deny to our feathered friends either common-sense or sagacity, ought to have seen that waiting and expectant mob in the barn-yard square of Moira mansion, just as the sun was going down, his beams glimmering red through the dark masses of the tall pine-trees.

There they all waited, to the number of about two hundred or more, and anyone brought up on a farm might be excused if he imagined that he actually knew what they said.

Behold, to-night the boys are somewhat later than usual, and the hens are all huddled together in the centre, with drooping tails, discussing the situation in low and somewhat discontented tones. The cocks themselves, whether game, Dorking, or Cochin, for there are many sorts, were all pugilistic enough by day, but now a fellow-feeling of hunger makes them wondrous kind, and there is not an atom of fight in them. Even the big game cock, a splendid bird, who could kill all the others in a very short time, one by one, stalks around, but makes no attempt at assault or battery.

"He won't come to-night," grumbles an old hen.

"I'm getting my death of cold," says another.

"And I'm dying of sleep," cries a third.

The ducks flank the crowd of hens. They are nearly all lying down, some fast asleep with heads round among their

feathers. Only the drakes are wide enough awake and on the alert, because that great red-necked gobbler often attacks the ducks from sheer wantonness, while the drakes defend the squat and waddling flock by viciously pinching the gobbler's toes.

The hen turkeys now look as discontented and disconsolate as the female barn-door fowls, only the restless geese and gander strut round at a distance, making echoes ring every now and then with their everlasting song of "Kay-ink!—kay-ink!—kay-ink!"

The sun sinks lower and lower, and finally disappears, though the glorious clouds he leaves behind are still reflected from the dark bosom of the loch in broad patches of crimson, bronze, and gold. But, listen! there are footsteps heard beyond the square, and the voices of the boys themselves in laughing conversation.

They come! they come!

"Now is the winter of our discontent,
Made glorious summer by this sun of York."

What a change comes o'er the spirit of the dream of that feathered multitude! Every head and every tail is erect in a moment. The ducks spring to their big flat feet. "Qua—ack, quack, quack, quack," they cry.

"Kay—ink! kay—ink!" shriek the geese, coming with a rush, which, with their outspread wings almost resembles a flight.

"Habb—a—bubb—a—bubb—a—bub!" screams the gobbler as he and his turkey hens run next.

The barn-door fowls are there already.

And now Colin and Olaf stand in the very centre of a feathered lake, and from their canvas bags, in every direction of the compass they shower the golden grain, while the noise, and the fighting, and scrambling make up a scene that it is impossible to describe.

But the last handful has been thrown, and now the birds retire to their roosts or beds, and soon all is peace and quiet.

Then Colin whistles a peculiar whistle, and down from a

tree that grows near to the corner of the square floats a beautiful bird. It is the pet peacock. He roosts up there of a night to save the splendour of his tail from defilement. And Colin finds a handful of pearl barley for him. He picks this out of the boy's hand; then, after strutting around for a short time with tail erect, he nods his head, as if saying good-night, and flies lazily back to his roost.

CHAPTER V.

A FALL OVER A CLIFF.

A UTUMN has gone. The days are getting short and shorter now. The crimson glory of the hill and brae has faded into dull browns and bronzes. The farmers' fields are all bare and bleak; from the higher mountain tracks the shepherds have brought down their sheep, that they may feed upon the stubble or the herbage in the strath. The loch now oftentimes assumes a gray and leaden hue even at midday, and the river that flows into it is oftentimes a brown and raging torrent, bringing down in its foaming tide branches of trees, logs of wood, heathy turfs, and even boulders of stone. The river that flows from the loch is sometimes now a river indeed, and one, too, that sets at defiance the boundaries that man has put to it, and, escaping from its bed, overflows the fields and moorland. Yet it seems overjoyed when it reaches the end of the strath and plunges madly over the rocks. Here in summer there were four or five small waterfalls, for every ledge of rock formed a linn or cataract. But now all those little waterfalls have become one great waterfall, and while the roar, the noise, and turmoil are appalling, and can be heard by night for many a mile away, the force of the water seems to shake the very hills around, and the lofty pine-trees quiver and nod in the forest near the banks of that raging torrent.

The higher mountains are now white with snow or frost nearly all day long; the pine-trees that essay to scale their sides look very black against the rocks. High up there the ptarmigan may still be found, but he and the alpine hare are now assuming their winter's coats. They will soon be dressed in white. Lower down the cosy coney still frisk and play among the stones and boulders, but from the glen itself the song-birds, with few exceptions, have long since flown away.

The trees near Grant M'Ivor's ancestral home harbour a rookery of which the laird is justly proud. The crows or larks are still there and noisy enough at times, and every evening food is placed for them where they can find it at early morn.

Colin and Olaf were still both together at Glen Moira, but instead of lamenting for the decay of nature and the dying year, they were both longing for snow time. They were going to have great doings this winter; snow time was going to be for them glow time, else they should know the reason why.

Somehow, I ought to tell you that Colin and Olaf had taken very much to each other. They had become the fastest friends in the world. When, about a month before this, Olaf's mother had gone back to Inverness, Colin begged so hard of her that Olaf might be left behind, his uncle supporting his pleading and plea, that Mrs. Ranna had been fain to give in.

"But I fear," she had said, "that you will find him a trouble after a while. Your hospitality is really very great."

Grant M'Ivor laughed.

"Our hospitality," he replied, "if properly analysed, would be found, I believe, to have a somewhat selfish foundation. Why, my dear Mrs. Ranna, we all positively love your lad. But looking at the matter from another point of view, just note the improvement in his health that has taken place of late, all the result of our pure mountain air, believe me, and nothing else."

Well, and as to Uncle Tom—Captain Junk, you know—

he had gone away long ago, and many months would pass before the *Blue Peter* sailed once more into the Firth of Forth. He had gone down the Mediterranean to Malta, to Alexandria, to Constantinople, and Greece, and might possibly—so he had told the boys—"take a turn" round to Madeira.

Had chance not thrown him into the company of Olaf Ranna, it is possible that Colin might have expressed a wish to go a voyage with Captain Junk. For he loved the sea just as many boys love it, who have never been on blue water in their lives; he loved it from reading about it in books. Well, to be sure, he had been once or twice as far as Leith in a steamboat, and once to Inverness, but there is no blue water, as sailors understand it, until you get out and away far on the bosom of the wide Atlantic Ocean.

But Olaf had in some measure changed Colin's inclinations. He still loved the sea in a dreamy, poetic kind of a way, but it was not so much the blue and sunny seas of southern climes, as the wild dark ocean that stretches from the islands of Shetland to the mysterious regions of ice and snow that surround the pole.

All the stories that Sigurd had told Olaf by the fireside of his Norwegian home in the long fore-nights of winter, Olaf retailed to Colin, and it is needless to say that they lost nothing by the repetition.

"In October," said Olaf to his friend one day, "our winter begins in Norseland. And yours?"

There was at one corner of the barn-yard square a small room devoted to carpenter's work, and which also could boast of a good turning-lathe. Here, when alone, Colin had whiled many an hour away, and especially in wet weather, when there was small encouragement to betake himself to the hills or forest, to the riverside or to the loch.

The two lads were in that room when Olaf put the question. The day was somewhat dark and gloomy, and the rain every now and then beat and rattled against the panes of glass. When they stood in the doorway and looked away

across the marshy valley, they could see sheet-like showers borne along the mountain sides by the fierce gusts of an easterly gale, while the loch itself, across which clouds were ever and anon being driven, was all a-smother with foam and spray.

"Our winter?" replied Colin, pointing to the hills and then to the wind-tortured pine trees in the forest above them. "Our winter? Do you not think that that is a fair sample of wintry weather?"

"O, no, no; I would call that but the herald of winter. I would see the snow on your plains, I would see the branches of the larch and the spruce borne groundwards with the burden thereof, I would see all the land white, the cataracts solid, and a mantle of ice and snow thrown over your chafing lake yonder."

"Ah, Olaf, you talk like a book or a bard! My English is unhappily more humble and matter of fact, but I think I can answer your question. Winter, then, is often ushered in by wild gales of wind like that which is blowing to-day. It may be that in a short week's time you may see more snow than you would care to face."

"I am glad."

"It is delightful to be out in it, Olaf, when the sun shines bright and clear, when the sky is cloudless and blue, and the frost hard, and when there isn't enough wind to blow one snowflake on top of the other; but when a blizzard comes on—ah! then."

"Yes, yes," cried Olaf with animation. "Tell me, tell me. Oh, it is that I love to hear of this."

Colin laughed at his companion's enthusiasm.

"I can't tell you," he said; "it needs poetic powers to describe a Highland snow blizzard."

"But you have been out in one?"

"Yes, worse luck, and wished myself anywhere else. High banks of snow across the road, Olaf, that no mortal could get over, a wind that cuts one like a knife, that penetrates through the thickest plaid, and seems to freeze the very marrow in one's bones; a wind, too, that is more than a wind, for it is everywhere filled with clouds of whirling

snow—snow in which every flake is reduced to icy powder, snow that is falling from clouds which are so low to the earth that a shepherd might stir them with his crook, snow whirled from off the forest trees and the bushes, snow caught up from the ground, snow that blinds you, that chokes your breath away, as if a cold snake were round your throat; snow that stupefies you till you totter and fall and have no wish to rise again, only to go to sleep, and wake—no more."

"Who is the bard now? Aha! Colin, you only need a harp and long white hair. But, come, you give me hope—the snow will soon be here."

Olaf picked up a long piece of wood as he spoke and laid it on the bench. It was the stem of a birch tree.

Olaf struck it critically with a little hammer.

"Is it well seasoned?" he inquired.

"Fairly well seasoned and tough."

"Ah! that is it. Good!"

"But what are you going to make? A boat model?" asked Colin.

"Oh, no, a *ski* (pronounced *she*).

"A *she*? What on earth is a *she*?"

"'Tis a kind of snow-shoe or snow-skate on which you and I—for I shall teach you the mysteries and delights of *skilöbning*, and you shall love it as much as I—will make many expeditions on the hills and valleys of your beautiful country."

"Well, go on; I am all attention. You have excited my curiosity."

"Oh, but I am not going to talk, I am going to work. Luckily you have all kinds of good tools here. I shall soon make my *skier*" (*she-er*).¹

"Whatever a man dares he can do," said Colin.

"You have plenty more wood?"

"Plenty of oak. Not much more seasoned birch."

The birch-wood, which Olaf had already begun to manipulate, was at once thrown down.

"Well," he cried, "produce it. The work will be harder,

¹ A pair of *ski*.

but the *ski* will be the better, though, for my own part, I love the birch with very thin slips of iron underneath to make the *ski* glide still more easily."

Colin soon produced the oak.

"Well," he said as he did so, "you will soon make me a Norwegian altogether. I believe you have already taught me so much of your language—so very like broad Scotch it is—that I want to get away over to your wild land to air it."

"You shall have plenty of opportunities. We have only to wait a little. But first you must be a good *skilöber*."

"She-lover? No, Olaf, I don't care a bit for girls. They are all right indoors, but on the hills or in the forest they are a drag. I would rather have a good dog any day."

"Ah! you joke. A *skilöber* is one who runs or glides on snow-shoes. And—but I am talking and trifling."

Olaf now set himself seriously to work to make his *skier*.

Much though I should like to tell you how he made, fashioned, or formed them, I fear that any attempt to do so in words or on paper would only end in failure. Yet so delightful is the exercise obtainable by means of these *skier* that I would like very much to hear of their being introduced into this country as a means of winter sport.

In England, even, there is usually a considerable deal of snow in the season, and in Scotland always. *Skilöbning* is not so very difficult to learn after all. In the country districts of Norway the children as soon as they are able to toddle learn the art of *skilöbning*; but Nansen tells us of a party of rustics who arrived in a town in Norway, the inhabitants of which had hardly ever seen a *ski*. These men gave many displays of their skill, and the sport "caught on", as the Yankees say. Well, *skilöbning* became so fashionable that boys and girls, men and women took to it, and became so proficient that in a year's time—I think it was a year—they challenged and beat the very team that had first introduced the sport to them.

I shall not be in the least surprised if, therefore, in a few years' time, *skilöbning* becomes fashionable in this country,

which, if not the cradle-land of all healthful outdoor games and exercises, is at least their nursery or home.

There are several varieties of *skier* used in Norway.

The *ski* I figure here (*vide* fig. 1) is a plan of that used by Nansen in his first crossing of Greenland. It is not precisely the same as that made by Olaf with Colin's slight assistance, but it will give the reader a very fair notion of the general formation of a good oak *ski* capable of sustaining plenty of work.

Each *ski*, then, was about seven and a half feet long and nearly four inches broad, just a trifle broader in front than right under foot or behind. You will note that on the upper

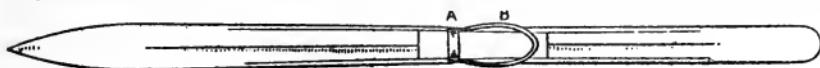


FIG. 1



FIG. 2

surface a kind of ridge runs right along from stem to stern. This gives strength and a certain amount of rigidity. I have not figured the under surface of the *ski*, but I should tell you that it is not perfectly plain, but has three tiny grooves, the centre one under the ridge, then one at each side. These grooves are not more than about $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch wide and very shallow. At A in fig. 1 you see the leather band into which the foot fits, and the strap and buckle—B—better seen in fig. 2, which goes round the heel of the boot and keeps the foot in position.

The heel-strap may be of softish leather, or it may be made of cane or withy-work.

This description of the Norway snow-shoe, I admit, is but a meagre one, and I confess also that it is written or given somewhat half-heartedly, because I am impressed with the belief that no youth, unless he has a pattern, will be able to make a good *ski* for himself.

But Olaf Ranna could have made a *ski* blindfolded, and indeed many blind men in Norway do make these snow-

shoes, and make them well too, just as in this country blind people make baskets.

Olaf, however, believed that nothing could be done well in a hurry, so that he took great pains in the cutting out of his *skier*. When at work he was wholly engrossed, and Colin could hardly get a word out of him, so that he had often to fall back upon the dogs for amusement. They were always ready for a romp.

After Olaf had finished one pair of shoes, he handed them over to Colin, to be nicely smoothed, oiled, and polished. Elbow-grease and oil are two fine things to perfect either a bat or a snow-shoe.

A whole week passed away. It was now nearly the middle of November, but winter, real winter, had not yet arrived. Then came a new moon. I am not going to say that the new moon brought clear weather or a change of wind. But, nevertheless, one night a scimitar of a moon hung over the hills in the west, in a sky as clear and pure as one could wish it, while the little wind there was blew from the nor'-nor'-west. There were mountain-like clouds—called cumulus by scientists—lying along the horizon. They were snow-white, and old Elspet, who was a reputed witch as far as the weather was concerned, asserted boldly that there would soon be frost and snow, and neither bite nor blade for bird or sheep.

Ever and anon one of those clouds would start on a voyage of adventure, apparently with the intention of blotting out the moon; but small though the moon was, it made short work with these clouds.

Meanwhile the glass went down, and next day the Laird gave orders that the sheep should be driven up from the haughs¹ and brought near to the home farm, where they could have turnips to eat, and so be able to defy the worst that might come.

Olaf's *skier* were finished, and no boy ever looked more pleased than he. Only his face grew gloomy again when he looked at the hills, and wondered when the snow would fall.

"We have only to wait a wee," said Colin, smiling at his

¹ The low lands adjoining the river.

friend's impatience. "Elspet is wondrously weather-wise, and says it is coming—and soon too."

Elspet was right. It seemed as though the clerk of the weather had only been waiting until Olaf had finished his *skier* to treat the country to a downfall.

The snow-storm, however, was not of long duration; nor did it blow and drift much, except away up among the higher reaches of the mountains, where there is nearly always a breeze even while it is perfectly calm in the straths and glens below.

"Now for the rejoicement!" cried Olaf, who, it must be confessed, made use of some strange words and expressions when in any way excited. "Now for the rejoicement!"

There was little to be done, however, for on the first and second days the snow was altogether too fine. Moreover, the snow fell so fast that it was impossible for Olaf, although he put on the *skier*, to see where he was skidding to. Colin did not venture to put on his. But he ran out with his friend. He kept alongside for some time on level road, for Colin was somewhat of an athlete.

By and by, however, they came to a down-hill or inclined plane, and Olaf shot ahead in a way that certainly was somewhat foolhardy, considering that he was in an unknown land.

Colin followed on in his trail, a double trail it was for fully half a mile, and then, lo and behold, the trail suddenly disappeared! It disappeared, to Colin's horror, close to the brink of an ugly precipice. Well, Olaf had often told him that *skilöbers* in his country thought nothing of leaping over considerable embankments, and alighting safe and sound in the snow beneath. But surely his friend would not be mad enough to venture a leap over a precipice of unknown height. No. The probability was that he had met with an accident.

Colin shouted again and again. There was no response, and then his heart began to beat high with fear.

Once again he shouted. Then listened. And this time from up the valley, faint and far, there sounded a kind of echo.

"Olaf! O—O—O—la—f!" cried Colin again and again, prolonging the first letter and raising the last syllable to the highest key he could compass.

"Coo—ee—!" came back through the blinding snow-mist, for the flakes were falling faster than ever.

In about five minutes' time a collie dog ran up to him, his coat so full of snow that he looked like a little white bear. Then, leaning heavily on his tall crook, a man appeared, rolled and muffled in a Highland plaid of the M'Ivor tartan.

"O Duncan, is it you?"

"It's shuist her nainsel' and noppddy else, Maister Colin."

"Was it you who shouted in reply to me?"

"Shuist my nainsel' and noppddy else."

"O, Duncan, I'm all in a lather of perspiration with perfect fear. Look, Duncan, at these marks. My dear friend Olaf was trying the snow-shoes, and has gone over the precipice. He is down there now, Duncan, down there—dead, else he would have answered."

"Pooh!" said Duncan; "what for should ye be after makin' the big baby of yourself? Duncan will shuist dig the laddie oot. Och! many and many is the sheepie she has dug oot afore noo. Come, Colin, else indeed, indeed it is smotherin' in earnest the bit of a boy may be."

"Wowff? wowff?" barked Collie inquiringly.

A dog can express quite a deal even by means of a bark, and if that "wowff" did not say to the shepherd, "Anything I can do, good master?"—then I have never heard a dog talk.

Duncan addressed him in a few words of Gaelic, that most expressive of all European languages, at the same time pointing first to the *ski* marks, then over the precipice.

The dog snuffed for a moment at the latter.

"Wowff!" he barked again, throwing back his head, as much as to say, "I have it, and now I'm off."

And off he ran, Duncan and Colin following.

In a very short time they were both down the hill to the left, and, following the dog's track, soon found themselves at the foot of the precipice. It was forty feet high at the very least, but luckily it was clean cut. Had there been on

it any projecting ledges, ten to one Olaf would have been dashed to pieces.

They found the dog hard at work tearing up the snow with his fore-paws and giving many a little whining bark, which told plainly that he was on the right scent. And so he was. Duncan and Colin both now helped him to drag away the snow. Ere long they found something hard and dark sticking up.

"It is the *ski*," cried Colin, working faster than ever. And now they have reached the body and drag it out.

Drag it out? Have they found a corpse, then? How cold Olaf is! How pale the face and blue the lips, and no pulse can be felt at the wrist!

CHAPTER VI.

A WILD JOURNEY.

O DO you think he is dead, Duncan?"

"I wouldn't wonder at all, at all, whatever. But, bless you, Maister Colin, many is the sheepie I've brought to life afore now."

As he spoke Duncan was by no means idle. He had divested himself not only of his big warm plaid, but of his thick coat as well. It had luckily ceased for a while to snow. Then on this comfortable, extempore bed Olaf was laid; the *skier* were taken off, then the boots and stockings; and while the shepherd applied vigorous friction with snow to feet and legs, Colin did the same as regards hands and wrists.

For a time there were no signs of life. Then there was a slight sigh.

"She is no dead yet," cried Duncan joyfully.

"Wowff, wowff!" barked Collie, and began to apply his warm tongue vigorously to the lad's cold cheek and ears.

Then Olaf gasped, and presently his eyes opened.

"May the Lord's name be praised!" cried Duncan.

This he well might say, for Olaf now sat up and smiled.

Duncan had placed the stockings in his own bosom to keep them warm, and he now drew them on.

"Shuist a wee thochtie o' a dram now," said Duncan. He pulled out a flask of whisky and applied it to Olaf's lips.

"No, no," said the boy. "I am a Good Templar, and I mustn't."

"Shure if it was fifty Templars rolled into one you was, you would have to take it, my lad. Shuist if you'll not be takin' it I'll throw it in your face. Her nainsel' is your doctor, and the dram is the medicine evermore."

Then Olaf drank several mouthfuls.

In about a quarter of an hour he was able to walk. But he did not put on the *skier* again that day. He confessed to feeling a little stiff the same evening at dinner, and Grant M'Ivor said it was no wonder; that if he must practise leaping over cliffs, a forty-feet jump was somewhat risky for the first day's practice.

Next morning Olaf was stiffer than before. But the snow still fell. So far as *skilöbning* was concerned he lost but little.

Early that evening the sky cleared, and at sunset near the horizon it was of a deep sea-green, merging into pale blue above. In that sea-green sky the evening star shone with a fulgence that the strange colour around it rendered ineffably sweet. There was not a breath of wind, nor was there next day.

Olaf's cure for his stiffness—a cure suggested by Colin himself—was one that some of my readers may think strange, but after a hard day's sport or walking, I can assure them it often acts like a charm. Old Elspet brought up a pailful of snow, and this was placed in his bath. Then Olaf plied the big sponge with vigour, and after rubbing hard for many minutes with rough towels, a little oil was well worked into limbs and joints.

No Viking ever ate a heartier breakfast than did Colin and Olaf that morning, and just as they were leaving to try their *skier*, the laird laughingly threw a word of warning after them with regard to the height of the cliffs they might come across—and go flying over.

And now these two young heroes of ours were to be toward each other in the position of teacher and pupil—Olaf the former, Colin the latter. The snow was in famous condition for practice. Newly-fallen snow is not appreciated by the *skilöber*, nor is soft, thawing snow. But the sun of last evening had just sufficed to melt the finer snow-crystals and pack the flakes, then the frost that followed had hardened the surface.

Olaf put on, or got aboard of, his *skier* at once. Colin refused to, on the plea that he felt sure he would make a fool of himself to begin with, and he would rather be in some place where the servants would not see him. So he took his *skier* on his back.

Olaf *skied* along the road, and Colin trotted beside him with the deerhounds and a Scotch terrier, Keltie by name, who thought Olaf no end of a joke. Then they left the beaten track and descended to the haughs by the river. Here was splendid ground for amateur practice, and Olaf helped Colin to buckle up.

“How do you feel?” said the former, for Colin was standing swaying about a little, and looking in anything but a very decided frame of mind.

“Feel?” he replied, smiling faintly, “I feel as if I were a barn-door fowl going to market with my feet tied.”

“Well, that feeling will wear off in time. You don’t feel at present, I suppose, that you could dance your Ghillie Callum or the Highland fling with these things on your feet.”

“Not with any satisfaction to myself, Olaf, or the onlookers, I fear.”

“Well, now, we are ready to skid. Are you ready?”

“I daresay I am,” said Colin disconsolately; “but I am thinking of the little bear when its mother put it down and told it to walk.”

“Yes, I remember, and the mother never told it how to, but I am going to show you. Look at me now.”

“I’m looking at you.”

“Well, don’t look so grief-ful. You are not going to be hanged, or done anything disagreeable with. Behold! I

forge ahead a little way. It is level ground. Do I hop? Not much. I know better. Do I lift my feet at all? I do not. I but shuffle or slide along. See?"

"Yes. It is very pretty, and *looks* easy."

"Now, for a time, the inclination to lift your feet from the ground will be very great, but you must keep it down, and keep down your toes also. You hold your pole in your right hand, as you have it now. You will find various uses for this. But of this more anon, as books say. The pole may help you in going uphill or on level ground, and it may keep you from falling while going downhill. I like a long one, and I have made both ours long."

"With your toes you steer the *ski*, as it were. Here on the level ground you observe my *skier* are kept parallel with each other, and my body as well balanced and erect as possible, though I may lean a little forward. I could not progress so well on level ground if I lifted my feet, besides the snow would stick to the *skier*, and that would retard my advancement. You follow me, Colin?"

"You mean I am to move on after you?"

"No, follow me mentally for the present. Then we will endeavour to reduce the lesson to practice. The stroke, if I may so call it, is given with the hips and thighs. So—and so. You observe how I move? Now the snow to-day being in such fine condition, I will show you what can be done in the way of speed. You will wait a little, won't you?"

"O," cried Colin, "I feel as if I could willingly wait here all day long. I kind of dread the future."

But Olaf was nearly out of hearing before he had finished speaking. It was beautiful. Colin envied him, as a tortoise might envy the flight of a sand-martin. Presently the young Norse lad was back again. He did not stop though, but went easily flying past. However, he soon returned and pulled up.

"At what rate were you moving just now?" said Colin.

"About ten miles an hour or nearly."

"And is that the fastest?"

"O no; going downhill we may do twenty-five or even thirty miles an hour. But going uphill it is simply a walk,

and sometimes a hard one it is. Well, once more, are you ready?"

"I am resigned," said Colin, with a sigh.

"Come on, then."

Colin came on. But, O dear! he came on in a very lame fashion indeed. His legs would lift, and his body would keep swaying about in the most ungainly fashion, while every now and then he felt sure he had dislocated both his ankles.

"You are doing beautiful! You are getting on lovelily."

Just as Olaf delivered himself of that new adverb "lovelily", one of Colin's *skier* came over a hillock or something, he threw out his pole to stick it in somewhere, anywhere, and next moment he made a hole in the snow, legs and *skier* waving helplessly in the frosty air.

Olaf only laughed.

"Looking back at you," he said, "you put me in mind of the child's illustrated alphabet."

"And what letter did I illustrate?"

"Well, with your legs and *skier* you made a first-rate capital letter 'W'."

However, he helped his friend up, and the lesson went on. And in less than two hours Colin really began to master the rudiments of *skilöbning*.

"I feel more hopeful now," he said.

"I believe," cried Olaf encouragingly, "it will be that you shall beat your teacher soon."

Well, nearly all that day, off and on, Colin continued his practising on the level. By sundown he was so tired that he could hardly walk home. He felt now as if he had been broken on the wheel, so he said.

"My ankles, anyhow, are both out of joint. I'm sure my big toe is swollen to five times its usual size, and as to my heels, I know they are just like a couple of frosted turnips."

Well, they were not so bad as that altogether, but Elspet became his doctor. He had a warm bath, and went to bed early, and next morning, after the snow-water bath, he told Olaf he felt as "caller" as a trout, and as strong as a colt. By the fourth day all tiredness had vanished, and he became almost an expert on the level ground.

Olaf now initiated him into the mysteries of hill-climbing, and here he was allowed to lift his feet somewhat, because the balling of the bottom of the *ski* with snow tended to prevent its slipping back down hill.

He was also taught to throw the *skier* outwards instead of keeping them parallel, and to advance one in front of the other. Then his pole came in handy here. But in spite of all precautions, Colin managed to spill himself most effectually many times on this never-to-be-forgotten day, and many times he succeeded in illustrating the big "W".

Somehow the heels of the *skier* got overlapped now and then, after which there was a catastrophe.

"I am determined, though," said his teacher, "that you shall be accomplished in hill-climbing. But," he added, "you may walk up sideways sometimes like a crab, thus."

Olaf gave him an illustration of the method, and Colin once more grew more hopeful. And to his credit be it told, that he stuck to his lessons so well that in about a week's time he could manage the *skier* pretty fairly either uphill or downhill.

But he, as yet, ventured on no such terrible downhill flights as did Olaf, whose progress down a steep declivity was sometimes astonishing, and quite took Colin's breath away. When the incline was extra long, and the angle acute, Olaf would ease matters by putting his pole between his legs, as children make a horse of a long stick, and riding it down. This checked in some measure the headlong speed of the *skier*.

It is needless to say that Colin "spilt" himself a great many more times in learning downhill work than in climbing. But he possessed the bold heart of the mountaineer; in his veins ran the best blood of the fighting clan M'Ivor, and he was not to be daunted by any number of mishaps. And so by the middle of December Olaf's pupil was almost fit for any kind of *ski* work.

Snow had fallen several times since the first slight storm, so that there were plenty of opportunities for practising. The only branch of *skilöbning* that Colin had not as yet

gone in for was leaping over precipices. Of this, I must confess, he felt rather shy, and no wonder, when he remembered his friend Olaf's fearful leap. This certainly had been an involuntary flight, but it had nearly ended in death. Might not a leap of less altitude result in a broken leg?

Shortly before Christmas a heavy fall of snow set in, and this was general all over, not only in the Highlands of Aberdeenshire, but in Inverness-shire as well.

Christmas day was bright and clear, and the wind had gone round to the south, bringing up therefrom light fleecy clouds that boded a thaw. This was just what Colin and Olaf did not want, so they went somewhat timidly to consult old Elspet.

"There'll be nae¹ thaw o' ony signefficance, my laddies," said the weather-witch.

"But how can you tell, Elspet?"

"By my jints and taes. I've had the rheumatics in my taes for forty years and mair, and they just ache awfu' afore a thaw comes. Speir at auld Murdoch, and he'll tell ye the same, my bonnie bairns."

And once again Elspet sustained her reputation of being a witch as to the weather, for back again into the north went the wind, only it scarcely blew at all. The sunset skies were a frosty green, and the night beautiful beyond measure with bright shining stars and a pearly moon.

Never had the snow been in better condition for *skilöbing*, so Olaf informed his friend Colin, and that night (the twenty-seventh of December), the two cronies put their heads together, and prepared for a long-projected expedition right across the mountains to Inverness.

Neither Colin's uncle nor his aunt made any objection.

"If I were a hundred years younger," said the Laird laughing, "and could skid along on those laths, I'd go with you myself, my lads. Only," he added, "'ware the cliffs. Mind that our mountains are for the most part higher than even yours, Olaf."

¹ In all Scotch words ending in *ae*, as "nae", "hae", "brae", &c., the vowels are pronounced almost like "ay" in "hay".

When our young heroes started upon this adventurous journey—which was to fit and prepare them, though they knew it not, for a far longer and ten times more perilous one—they had no idea how long it would take them, because they could not tell how many hours the snow might retain its present condition. This, however, only lent an additional spice of danger and doubt to the undertaking, and therefore an extra charm.

They did not trouble with much of an outfit, nor did they take more than one day's provisions in their haversacks. They wore strong boots and knickerbockers, Glengarry bonnets, and plaids worn shepherd-fashion—I ought to say lowland shepherd-fashion—that is, plaited across the back, and with the two ends hanging down in front and tucked under the portion of the plaid going round the waist. Worn thus, it would protect the most vulnerable portions of the body against the keenest winds that could blow, and it would not be any hindrance to work and progress. In a waterproof satchel they also took a change of underclothing, and an extra pair of strong stockings.

The morning of the twenty-eighth was beautiful beyond description. Not a breath of wind to stir even a snow-flake in the forest, a blue sky above, and sunshine that, but for the hard frost—for the mercury got down within a few degrees of zero—would have been hot.

Old Elspet gave them her blessing, and said, “The Lord be wi' ye, my bonnie bairns!” The Laird gave them a purse, and Aunt M'Ivor gave each a kiss as she bade them “good-bye”. But old Duncan, the shepherd, met them at the end of the wooded avenue. He doffed his cap, and then addressed them as follows:

“Ye'll shuist be after taking Ghillie wi' ye for safety, laddies?”

Ghillie was the collie dog who had excavated Olaf when he fell over the cliff.

“The bit doggie,” he went on, “is wiser far, sure enough, than mony a Christian pody. He'll be a comfort to ye, and if you'll pe lost at all, sure the collie will pe after finding ye again, whatefer.”

Both boys shook Duncan by the hand, and thanked him, gladly accepting the dog's company.

"Wowff, wowff!" barked Ghillie. This sounded like a good-bye salute to his master.

Then off they started. They kept the highway for several miles. This afforded fairly good *skilöbning*, for although it had been traversed by sleighs innumerable, wheels had not been on it for many a day. But they soon found it necessary to desert the highway, and to take as straight a course as possible westwards.

Now, a journey like that which our heroes have just commenced is like none other that I know of. There is assuredly a deal of romance about it, but there is a good deal of uncertainty about it also, to say nothing of the hazard or danger. By the aid of maps alone they have to traverse one of the wildest regions in Europe, hills and moorlands deeply buried in snow, frozen lochs innumerable; frozen streams too. Ay, the very cataracts themselves, that in the sweet summer-time, or in autumn when the heather is all in crimson bloom, roar over the lofty cliffs or slip adown the braes like cords of frosted silver, would now be locked in the firm grip of winter, and scarcely perceptible amidst the snows that flanked them.

They have to skid across endless mosses and plains, where path there is none; through forests seldom trodden at this bleak season of the year by foot of man, the home of the red deer, the hawk, the eagle, and the great owl; and they have to skirt mountains whose lofty, jagged summits pierce the sky nearly a mile above the level of the sea. A country, too, so sparsely inhabited that one may travel a whole day sometimes and not meet a human being nor see a hut or a house.

Ah! what a glorious thing is youth. Olaf and Colin skid along as brimful of happiness and joy as the laverocks that fan the snow-white clouds in spring-time, and as heedless of dangers to come as was honest Ghillie, the collie, who runs joyfully by their side.

They crossed over the brow of a well-wooded hill by mid-day, and descended carefully to a glen beneath. The brae

they were now on was somewhat steep. Both Colin and Olaf would gladly have shot away at breakneck speed, but they knew not the ground. Besides, there were trees on each side, and at any moment they might reach the brink of an unseen precipice and shoot over into—into eternity.

But they came to the edge of the pine wood at last, and could now see a long distance adown the valley or glen. Smoke was rising from a little farm-house on the opposite side. This they determined to reach, and, if possible, purchase a little milk to wash down their dinner withal.

In less than an hour they stood at the door of the house or cottage. There was a considerable air of comfort about the place. The door was in front with a window on each side, and the house could boast of chimneys also. The husbandman himself came to the door, to welcome the strangers in, and both he and his sonsy wife and brawny children examined the *skier* with much interest and not a little amusement.

The man preferred to talk in Gaelic, so that the conversation, with the exception of some sentences that Colin translated, was entirely lost upon Olaf. But none the less did he make a hearty meal. The crofter would not permit them to use the luncheon they had brought in their satchels. His wife produced a trayful of beautiful, crisp, white oat-cakes, a plateful of delicious butter, a kebbuck¹ of her own manufacture, and two immense basins of rich and creamy milk.

Money? Did they want to insult him? Did they not remember what the Good Book said, "*Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unwarens.*"

Nor had Ghillie been forgotten. Oat-cake was broken up for him in a basin of warm milk, and he made a hearty meal; then, by way of thanks, he licked the bairnie's cheek who had fed him.

After resting and chatting for a time, and telling these humble folks,—who never in all their lives had been ten miles beyond their own glen,—many of the wonders of the

¹ Big cheese.

outside world, our heroes got up, resumed their plaids and *skier*, and prepared to renew the journey.

The crofter said, before they set out, that if they would only stop all night they would be right welcome. They should have the best bed, and he and his wife would make shift on the floor. They declined the offer with many thanks. The kindly fellow, however, could not give them very much information concerning their route. It was a wild, wild country, that was all he could say, and he hoped the Lord would be around them and protect them from every danger.

So with this blessing ringing in their ears they took their departure.

They soon crossed another hill, which led them to the edge of a narrow defile, in the centre of which was a little loch and a stream, both grimly locked in frost. So steep was the declivity that they did not venture to *ski* down, and it was fully half an hour before they found themselves at the bottom. It was, indeed, what would have been called a "cañon" in the Rocky Mountains or in California. It was entirely uninhabited; and rose steadily towards a table-land in the north-west.

That was a long and a weary climb, and both our heroes were somewhat tired before they reached the table-land above, which they did just as the sun was sinking low behind the south-western hills. The scene that now presented itself to their view was one of the wildest desolation. No doubt "wildest grandeur" would be the proper words to use were the time summer or autumn, for the moorland would then be covered green or crimson, the tufted snow-white toad-tails would be waving in the breeze, and many a sweet little floweret would be nodding over the pools and ponds. Had it been the gentle spring-time, they would have heard the grouse and the ptarmigan calling to their mates; the linnet singing plaintively on the stunted but fragrant myrtle; the mountain laverock singing high against the clouds, and the voice of the mire-snipe or "goat of the air" laughing or whinnying as it flew swiftly overhead; they would have seen the lambs frisking with their

dams, and as they neared the brown rushy pools they would have startled the whirring wild-duck and the timid coot.

But now, in the dead of winter, all was bleak and desolate, and a silence reigned all around, almost as awesome as the silence of Space itself.

The moor was many miles in extent, and round about it rose the everlasting hills and mountains. Yonder, indeed, his gigantic summit tipped with the tenderest tints of the rose, casting shadows grey and blue, shot high in air that mighty monarch of mountains Ben Macdhui itself, and many others of but little less importance. Indeed, it was hill piled on hill, mountain rising over mountain all around —a glorious and indescribable picture indeed.

But our heroes were only human after all, and though they stopped for a short time to rest and gaze about them, impressed and even awed by the majesty of God's great works, nature soon began to assert itself; they felt not only cold, but just a little hungry.

On they must press therefore, for though the twilight is long in these regions, it is not indefinite, and they knew not where they were to sleep.

It was very easy work on the hard surface of the snow, and across ground that was almost level. This moor was quite level in the centre indeed, for here was a loch. A deep dark loch; so deep was it that shepherds believed it bottomless; there were, moreover, ugly stories and superstitions connected with this Loch Dhui. A dreadful water-kelpie dwelt in the black depths of the lake, in under the banks in a fearsome cave, and his pastime used to be, whenever chance threw it in his way, to drag in and drown the unwary and belated traveller, and then pick his bones. The moor itself was haunted by tiny sprites, who showed a light before the human wanderer, until they succeeded in luring him into a morass. As soon as he began to sink in the quagmire, those terrible bogies used to form a circle and dance madly round him, laughing and shrieking meanwhile in the most eldritch way. This was but a signal to the water-kelpie, telling him that his supper was ready, then the awful spirit would come striding over the moor. As tall as two men

was he, with fearful claws on feet and hands, and wings like a bat's between. Then he would seize the shrieking traveller, drag him forth from the quagmire, and bear him away to the darksome loch.

Often and often shepherds have heard the terrible shrieking, the eldritch, unholy laughter of the brownies, and the sullen splash as the kelpie sank with his victim in the loch.

But our heroes were all unconscious of these dark doings, and unconscious indeed that they were *skilöbning* over the water.

They reached the end of the moorland at last. And now the country seemed to get wilder and wilder, though somewhat lower, and though stunted patches of pine-forest leaned here and there upon the mountains' sides. But the rose tints had fled from the brow of the lofty Ben, one star was already out, so night came on apace, yet there was no sign of either house or habitation.

They were tired indeed, for the day's journey had been long and toilsome.

Where should they sleep?

CHAPTER VII.

THE SMUGGLERS' CAVE—PRISONERS IN THE FOREST—AT SEA IN A STORM.

WHERE should they sleep? That was the burning question, if anything could be called burning in frost and cold so bitter as that which now gathered around the hills and glens. Where should they sleep? Well, if they had asked the question loud enough, Echo would have answered. But the answer would have been far from satisfactory.

"There are no huts or houses," said Colin, "and we can't go on much longer. I fear we'll have to creep under a stone and curl up in our plaids."

"Well, it isn't likely to snow to-night," said Olaf, "and so we needn't fear being buried alive."

As they spoke they were descending an incline as speedily as the uncertain light, and the uncertainty of what might be before them in the shape of cliffs, allowed. Soon they found themselves at the foot of a steep precipice, and the entrance to a kind of cave formed by snow-laden branches of trees.

"This will do," said Olaf. "We will sleep under these trees, as I have often done before. Snow is wondersome warm."

"Very well," said Colin, bending down to undo his *skier* straps. "Let us leave our boots at the bed-room door for the servant in the morning."

When he looked up Olaf was gone.

"Where are you, old man?" he shouted.

And a muffled voice replied:

"Come here, Colin, come here."

Colin followed, and soon found himself inside a real cave, the entrance to which it seemed that Ghillie had found. It was not dark, for Olaf, after striking a match, had found a "fir candle",¹ and, lighting it, held it like a torch above his head.

"Olaf, we're in luck. Let's explore."

The outside cave was a mere passage compared to the immense chamber they presently found themselves in.

"Some shepherd's habitation, no doubt," said Colin. "Well, it is lucky we found it. And here is a big train-oil lamp. Light it, Olaf, and put down your fir candle."

The lamp once lit, they could see better around them. There was a hearth on which a fire of wood and peat had recently burned. Colin stirred up the ashes and found red embers underneath, so he soon had a splendid fire. Ghillie curled himself up in front of it after shaking the snow from his coat.

Instead of distributing itself all throughout the vault-like chamber, the smoke was sucked up a wide flue and went the boys knew not whither. Nor did they care. All they

¹ Huge pieces of old fir are found in the mosses and morasses that have lain there for ages and ages. They are split up and used as candles by the peasantry of the north. This fir is very full of "oil".

did know was, that they were exceedingly snug, so they sat down on some boxes and prepared to eat their supper, sharing it with Ghillie.

In one corner was a bed of dried ferns, raised on a wooden trestle about a foot and a half above the ground, which the boys determined to make use of. They found a pailful of water and a tin pannikin. After smashing the ice they had a hearty drink. They filled a basin and gave Ghillie a drink next. Then arranging the fire, so that it should not die down quite, they both knelt and said their prayers.

In a short time they were sound enough asleep.

The evening—for it was not late—wore away, the fire burned lower and lower. But the boys slept on. It must have been about one o'clock, when they both sprang suddenly up. They had been awakened by Ghillie's loud and fierce barking.

A tall and stalwart Highlander, plaided but not kilted, stood in the entrance. There was just light enough to see his figure, as well as the faces of two others who peeped round his shoulders.

"Down, dog, down!" shouted the man in Gaelic, "or I'll put a bullet through the brains of you."

"Who is here?" he continued in English. "Look you, now. I'm seeing the two of you on the bed in the corner. But there's four of us, and there is more comin'. Now, Messrs. Excisemen, it's you that's our prisoners. Make but a single movement, and as sure as the gor-cock craws on the top of Ben Tilt, you'll never see the morning light, and your nearest and dearest will never find out where the bones of you are buried."

As the giant spoke, the boys could see that in his right hand he held a revolver, while in his left gleamed a very murderous-looking dirk.

Both lads were frightened enough.

Perhaps it was Colin who first regained his self-possession. He shouted to Ghillie to keep quiet, then he stood up.

"You will see," he said; "when I stir up the fire and light the lamp, how far you're mistaken. We are not excisemen, only boys on a tour."

"Spies, then?"

Colin made up the fire and lit the lamp. Not coolly certainly, but he did it. Then he confronted the men, who had now crowded into the cave. It took some time to convince them, however. But the boys told the plain, unvarnished truth, and were believed at last.

It was no other than a smugglers' den into which they had unwittingly wandered.¹ But they were nevertheless treated with kindness.

Evidently, however, the men had come here to-night intent on business. For many more arrived, and from an inner cave or recess small cask after small cask was taken out, just enough for one man to carry. These were mounted on the shoulders of the sturdy fellows, and they went silently away with them.

The interior of a smugglers' cave, when the owners are there, is generally described by ranting writers as a scene of revelry and wild orgy. On the contrary, it is more often than not, remarkable for order and quiet. These men to-night,—though, had they confronted real excisemen or the police, they were prepared to fight,—looked more like sheep-farmers or crofters than the smuggler of your "penny-dreadful" and two-penny-halfpenny theatres.

"Boys, you'll lie down and sleep," said the giant after a time. "I suppose you won't have a drop o' the crayture? Well, you're better without. Sleep, you're as safe as if you were in the arms of the mothers that bore ye."

It was still early in the morning when the lads were once more aroused by someone shaking them by the shoulders. The giant towered above them smiling.

There was a roaring fire on the hearth, and three men sat near it eating a hearty breakfast of porridge and milk. Colin and Olaf were by no means loth to join them.

Then the giant stood up.

"Are you ready?" he said. "Very goot. No harm is goin' to happen you. You needn't put on your skates; you'll have to walk a mile or two. Donald, tie up their eyes."

¹ There are, even yet, very many such places hidden among the Highland hills, especially in the more central districts, and towards the west coast.

The lads submitted quietly, after putting on their plaids, and taking their skier under their arms.

"Good-day, lads, and the Lord be wi' ye!"

I have yet to learn the value of a smuggler's prayer or blessing, but it was given heartily enough anyhow.

Two men accompanied our heroes, and, judging by the very long time they were kept blindfolded, they must have been conducted seven miles at least from the cave that had afforded them shelter.

Then they were allowed sight and freedom.

It was barely daylight even yet; but they stood on a road that led through a wood near to a roaring waterfall and river.

"Which is our way?" said Colin.

"The sun rises yonder, and you're about five-and-thirty miles from Struan."

This was spoken in Gaelic, the only language these men understood. Then they said "Good-day", and immediately disappeared in the wood.

"Beautiful!" cried Olaf, "O, Colin, the romancesomeness of it!"

"Yes," said Colin; "it is very romantic, but I fear we have come considerably out of our way, and gone farther south than we required to."

"Never mind. The longer the road, the more the adventures."

Olaf consulted the map. Struan, or a part of it, lay somewhere on the great highway 'twixt Perth and Inverness across the Grampians. They must try to strike this road somewhere.

They now got their skier on once more, and set out along the road or path, for at times it seemed little more than a mere sheep-track. But, as far as they could judge, it was leading them directly south. It was exceedingly toilsome too, and the whole forenoon passed away without their having made very much progress.

About one o'clock, after they had dined in a frugal way, eating snow after their repast, as they could find no water; they came to a very tall boarded and wired fence, inside of

which was a wide expanse of beautiful spruce trees, their branches all leaning earthwards with their burdens of snow.

The road was then taking a bend quite to the east, as far as they could judge.

"Bother!" cried Colin at last. "Why, Olaf, we're going back home again. Come, let us get over the fence, and go directly through the forest."

"But won't that be trespassing?"

"Yes, but we must chance it. Come."

It was not without considerable difficulty, not to talk of torn garments, that they succeeded at last in mounting the fence.

"If this," said Colin, when they had once again started, making more or less of a bee-line towards the west, or what they took to be the west; "if this be one of the great Highland forests, Olaf, it is under a tree we will have to sleep to-night."

Olaf laughed lightly. Nothing, it seemed, caused that lad's spirits to sink to zero. So, on all the afternoon they skidded through the forest, up hill and down dell, on and on and on. But never a house nor signs of human habitation did they come near.

They were making very fair progress, however, considering the wildness of the forest. The English reader may be pardoned for thinking that they were all the while passing through a woodland on a comparative level. It was quite the reverse. In this great forest, which could hide the largest in England in one corner of it, are streams and lakes and waterfalls, lordly pine woods, lonely, bleak, bare moorlands, on whose herbage the wild deer in herds do browse in summer, and tall mountains raising their lofty summits till they pierce the highest clouds.

In imagining that they could make a bee-line through a forest so wild as this, the boys were greatly mistaken.

The days are very long in summer time in the northern part of Scotland, but very short in winter, for then before four o'clock darkness begins if the sky is cloudy.

Colin and Olaf were descending a hill towards a wooded

ravine, in which they hoped to find shelter for the night. They were nearly at the bottom when bang went a gun quite close to them, the shot singing and pinging close over their heads.

"Some one firing at a rabbit," said Colin.

"Somewhat near my head though," said Olaf.

"Stop! halt!" cried a voice. "It is through the legs of ye I'll be putting the next shot."

Then a tall, strapping Highlander in kilt and belts rushed into the open.

"Who are ye, at all, at all? It is after the deer you'll be. I'll take ye before the duke."

"No, you won't," said Colin laughing.

"Well, it's cool you are anyhow. And what is it at all you are wearing. Sure I niver in all the life of me saw boots like these before. Och! the heels and the toes that are on them."

"Well, we'd be glad of a drink of milk," said Colin.

"And it's that you'll both have, for I see now it is only boys enjoyin' a frolic you are."

"That's it. You have guessed aright."

"My house is within a gun-shot, and, troth, there isn't another till you come to the road twixt the hotel and Struan, a dozen long Scotch miles, so it's sleep on the snow-clad heather you'll have to unless you take a shake-down wi' myself."

Glad enough were the boys to find themselves once more within doors. The sheiling where this keeper dwelt was but a small one, and very lonesome. A little fair-haired bonnetless boy shared his solitude and helped him to feed the deer when they were driven down in their thousands by the storms. This lad looked as wild as a ferret, and far more frightened.

In putting their hands into their satchels, the boys found flasks of whisky! Put there by the smugglers.

They handed these to the keeper, and very pleased he seemed. Then they spent all together a very happy evening, singing songs and telling stories till bedtime.

The keeper knew all the forest, and after a breakfast of

oatmeal porridge and milk—for the keeper kept a cow—he put his gun over his shoulder and convoyed them for more than half a dozen miles through the forest.

He gave them an envelope as he bade them good-bye.

"If you'll meet another keeper," he said, "let him see this same, and you'll not forget the watchword 'Koureagh'?"

When they had reached the road, which they did in less than two hours, the most hazardous part of their journey may have been said to be over.

From Struan, however, far away to the lonely hotel of Dalwhinnie, which stands about two thousand feet above the sea-level, the road was solitary and wild in the extreme, and for nearly thirty miles hardly was a house or even hut to be seen.

Arrived at Dalwhinnie, a right warm and motherly welcome awaited them. The landlord himself was kindness personified, but he handed the lads over to his wife, a bustling, pleasant-faced, and somewhat nervous little body, who soon succeeded in making Colin and Olaf not only comfortable, but as happy as ever they had been in their lives.

It was long past eleven o'clock before they retired for the night, for honest John, the landlord, had many a story to tell himself, but kept the boys talking and yarning also.

"It does seem strange to sleep between sheets once more," said Olaf. "Why, it appears to be a whole month since we left dear old Moira mansion."

Next day they were preparing to resume their journey, but John said: "No boys, no. This is Hogmanay,¹ and guests of ours you've got to be, so content yourselves. We don't see two such bright happy faces every day at this dreary time of the year."

So the boys stayed in this wild upland not only for Hogmanay, but New Year's Day as well, and one day more for luck. Then with many kindly words of farewell, they started on their way once more.

The country continued wild and very beautiful, albeit

¹ The last day of the year.

all dressed in a garment of snow. But they had many a romantic pass to get through, and many a dangerous spot before they reached Inverness, which they did safely, however, in two days' time.

They were not even yet at their journey's end, but they stayed for a whole week in the beautiful capital of the Scottish Highlands, then passed on along the banks of the river Ness, and the hard frozen and snow-covered Caledonian Canal.

Among the woods on the side of a bonnie brae stood the beautiful house which Mrs. Ranna, Olaf's mother, called her Highland home. A grand specimen of a true Highlander was Olaf's grandfather, and a hearty welcome, I need hardly say, was accorded to both our young *skilöbers*.

"O," said Colin, "we did try so hard to be here on Hogmanay night, or to be first-foot to you on New-Year's Day morning, but we did not expect the road would have been so long, and so rough and wild."

"Well," said Mrs. Ranna smiling, as she kissed her boy again, "here you are safe and sound, Heaven be praised, and here you shall remain, both of you, till you get fairly tired of us!"

"O, that we never will," said Olaf, "only, dear mother, mind, our Sigurd is coming over with the yacht about the end of the month to take us both to Norway!"

"O, you rambling boys!"

"But, mother, we are both going to be sailors anyhow, then we shall ramble more. But, meanwhile, Colin must see something of my country in snow time, as I have seen so much of his. I want to make him envious, you know."

And Colin simply laughed. He was a true Scot, and the bare idea of any land on earth being one whit more romantic, or more beautiful than his own was simply preposterous.

There was plenty of winter enjoyment for the boys to be had in the country all round Belle-Voieach as his grandfather's place was called.

It was just the time for sleighing, and then there was *skilöbning*, and skating on the canal, a mile of which was kept

swept for the purpose, to say nothing of curling on the loch, a great portion of which was that winter frozen hard.

Colin was delighted with the *Viking*, on the whole. The *Viking* was the name given to Olaf's yacht.

Let me tell you at once that she was no beauty. Dismiss from your mind all ideas of fine lines, clipper bows, tall raking masts, jibboom and keel up to date, and all racing perfections. The *Viking* had bows more like a Dutchman's lugger, her stern, too, was round and somewhat clumsy. Her one mast was thick and heavy, her sails of the heaviest canvas, but—strength had been studied everywhere. She was built for strength and safety. She looked all over a *Viking*. The seas, you would have said, as you gazed upon her, were never raised by wind or storm that could "batter her bows to boards or carry her mast away". Swamp her? Impossible. Only give Sigurd time to batten down, and she was safe from all danger of swamping, or getting pooped.

You have heard of the *Thistle*. Well, a most charming witch of a yacht she is, and could walk to windward of a yacht like the *Viking* hand over hand. But the *Viking* could outlive a storm in which the *Thistle* would founder, and if the *Thistle* collided with the *Viking* then the sooner her crew scrambled on board the Norwegian the better would it be for the crew.

Down below? Well, she was as rough as rough. No gilding, no elegance, no finery, but solid comfort everywhere.

Then on a wind, and even in something of a seaway, the boy—a wild unkempt fisher lad called Svolto, that Sigurd had caught in one of the fjords on the north-west coast—could steer and manage her easily. This boy was probably about sixteen years of age, and very short and squat. He was supposed to be a half-bred Lapp, and he was as faithful as Duncan's collie Ghillie, and that is saying a good deal.

So, as I say, Colin on the whole was delighted with the *Viking*.

They sailed from Inverness on the 25th of January, and it was evident from the first that they were going to have

a stormy passage. But Sigurd took it very coolly. He close-reefed the main sail, and bent a storm-jib, and bid the wind and sea do their worst.

The wind and sea seemed determined to respond to the invitation. It blew half a gale—at least as the storm came from the north, the lay of the land placed the *Viking* on a lee shore. But a lee shore is not to be feared if you have plenty of offing, and Sigurd fought the wind to its very teeth, and before he put very much easterling in it, he reached away up north a goodly way, and then began to stretch outwards in the direction of his own land.

For her build—though it may not be believed—the *Viking* sailed fairly near to the wind, although she was bound in such a breeze to make some considerable leeway.

When Sigurd came down below to the little cabin amidships, dignified by the title of saloon, he looked as calm and fearless as if no wind at all were blowing, despite the fact that every now and then the saucy wee craft was hit by a buffeting sea right abeam, with a force that appeared to jump her clean out of the water, or off her legs as Colin phrased it.

“Judging from your face,” said the latter, “we are pretty safe.”

Sigurd nodded and smiled. He was a man who never spoke more than there was any necessity for.

“We might run into something, that is all,” he added.

Then he proceeded to make some coffee. Sigurd gave himself the credit of making as good coffee as ever was brewed or drank, and no one who ever tasted his coffee felt inclined to deny him the honour he claimed.

Fiddles were needed to-night on the saloon table to keep things on. For the *Viking* not only rolled, and plunged, and dipped, and reeled, but in Sigurd’s own phraseology, “she skipped even like unto a little lamb”.

A doorway opened abaft the saloon into a small cabin, which was also the galley, and could be entered from a companion-way in the deck near the big heavy tiller. But the *Viking* was battened down to-night. This door Sigurd left open that he might hear what the boys said.

The delightful odour of fried bacon that soon proceeded from this galley convinced the lads that supper was being prepared.

Although he had never been much at sea, Colin was constantly in a boat in all weathers—and storms do arise on Highland lakes at times—so although the *Viking* played at pitch and toss to-night, he did not feel at all ill, and was able to do ample justice to the repast of bacon and eggs that Sigurd now placed upon the table.

Colin afterwards expressed a wish to go on deck to have a look at the weather, but Sigurd would not hear of it. Olaf and the boy and himself could all hold on, he said, by the skin of their teeth, but there was no bulwark around the deck worth speaking of, and so safety below was preferable to risk above.

It was indeed a dark and a dirty night! The sky was heavily overcast with clouds, and it was moonless. Next week there would be a new moon, and every probability of a spell of fine weather, but this was the dark week. There was scarcely a possibility of seeing anything from the deck, except the foam-crested billows.

The noise was almost deafening. Colin was allowed to put his head out from under the tarpaulin and look about him, for although there was not the roar we are used to hear on board big ships when it blows great guns, the wind shrieked and whistled, and the waves sang. This is plain language, but had you been on board the *Viking* that night and had you put your head on deck, you would have said that it just suited the situation.

I doubt, however, if you would have cared to have kept your head in that position very long. Colin did not, for the spray that dashed on board was blinding—not that eyes were of very much use, however, on a night so black and dark. Then a sea caught him in the teeth, and another nearly cut his head off, so he disappeared like a Jack-in-the-box.

“Had enough?” asked Olaf, who had both legs on a locker, and was sipping more coffee.

“Yes, thanks,” said Colin; “enough to last me all night.”

"Well, sit down and be social like Sigurd and me and Ghillie here."

Ghillie was making himself at home on the other locker, so Colin stretched himself there, and the collie willingly became his pillow.

"Now, Sigurd, it is a long time before we can think of turning in, so light your cigar—one of those I bought you, for your own old pipe would smother bees—and tell us a story."

"A true story?"

"O, yes; I know that my friend Colin would like to hear something about the wondrous regions round the Pole, where you have spent so many years of your life."

"My English is not very good," began Sigurd.

"O," cried Colin, "on the contrary, I think it excellent. I have been studying hard for months with Olaf to acquire a little Norwegian, but I doubt if I can as yet bless myself in your norlan' tongue."

So Sigurd began.

I am not—not at present, at all events—going to put in print the story Sigurd told Colin, for it was to him he especially addressed himself; but it was, to some extent, the story of his own life and adventures in that great white country beyond the Arctic circle, the which if anyone visits but once he ever longs to see again.

As he listened, a glamour or spell seemed to be flung around our hero Colin. It was the glamour of the spirit of the ice.

But Sigurd was silent at last.

"Are you done?" said Colin.

Sigurd smiled and nodded. "Done?" he said. "Why, master, it will soon be to-morrow."

Whether to-morrow ever comes is a question, but at this moment Olaf, smiling, held up his father's watch. It was perilously near to the midnight hour.

"I could not have believed it," said Colin.

Then with knitted brows he sat for a little while drumming the table with his fingers and nails.

"What are you thinking about?" said Olaf. "Don't

answer: I know. You are thinking that if ever you have the chance you will visit the sea of ice, and witness for yourself some of the wonders that Sigurd has been good enough to tell us of."

"You are right, Olaf."

"I knew I was. Well, an opportunity may arise sooner than you imagine."

"That is true," said Sigurd.

"I do not quite understand," said Colin.

"Well, I have heard Mr. Olaf say you were an excellent rifle shot."

"I may say," quoth Colin, "that I was almost born with a rifle in my hand."

"What a dangersome child you must have been," said Olaf laughing.

"My uncle can and has brought down an eagle on the wing with his rifle. He taught me first to pull a trigger."

"And Olaf, too, can shoot well," continued Sigurd. "That is good. I know men who command sailing-ships who would gladly give both of you board, and probably wages as well, in return for the use you might make of your guns."

"Hurrah!" cried Colin. "O, don't say much more either of you. I shall turn in now. I shall fall asleep thinking about the great white land, and dream I am there."

CHAPTER VIII.

NORWEGIAN FJORDS IN WINTER—BIRDS! BIRDS! BIRDS!

COLIN slept long and soundly. Whether he dreamt of the great white land or not I cannot say; but, if so, his dreams must have been so pleasant that he found it difficult to tear himself away from them, for it was past eight and nearly broad daylight before he awoke.

The first thing he was sensible of was that he felt hungry—the second that breakfast was cooking.

The wind had gone down, and with it the sea, so that the *Viking* was stretching merrily off and away across the foam for Bergen. Olaf was up and dressed, and even Ghillie, although he certainly was no sailor, had ventured on deck.

It did not take Colin very long to perform his ablutions and to dress. The little yacht was no longer battened down, so he went up at once, and Olaf met him with a merry smile.

"See," he cried, "the wind has gone round to the west; so right soon we shall see the hills and the mountains of my dear native land!"

The morning was crisp, clear, and cold, so that our heroes were not at all sorry when Sigurd's rather plain figure-head was popped above the companion, and breakfast was announced.

The wind kept fair all the rest of the passage, and in due time the *Viking's* anchor was let go near an island not far from Bergen. On this island lived Sigurd's old mother, and it was to permit the worthy fellow to visit her that the *Viking* was anchored in the bay.

Sigurd came of a good old family of fisher people, who were so clannish in their way, that they had married and intermarried among each other for generations. These frugal folks were as brave as brave could be, and at sea nothing could exceed their courage and daring. They supplied many a sturdy sailor to the ships that, year after year, sailed northwards to the Greenland seas, and, as far as one can judge, the forefathers of this very people may have been seamen with, and fought under the Vikings themselves.

Well, Colin landed at Bergen in a very contented and good-natured frame of mind. He was quite prepared, for Olaf's sake, to praise and admire all he saw. At the same time, he did not expect to find Bergen a city so nicely laid out as it really is.

There is a little town called Buckie, in Scotland, rather celebrated for its dried haddocks, and Colin told his friend that he had in reality expected to find Bergen a kind of enlarged edition of Buckie.

But here were three good harbours, shipping innumerable,

quays that put him in mind of those in Aberdeen, spacious streets and churches, to say nothing of a Gothic-built cathedral.

The whole was imposing to a degree. When tired of wandering through the town, Colin and Olaf dined at an excellent hotel, then paid a visit to the suburbs, and to the forts, castles, and ramparts, that mount many a heavy and formidable-looking gun, and are as well manned as armed. But, after all, it was in the hills and mountains which formed the back-ground of the view, and stood out bold and white against the blue of the sky, that Colin seemed most interested.

"Ah!" said Olaf, "thither we shall go to-morrow, and you shall see a sight that will make you once more green with envy. Ha! ha!"

Olaf was as good as his word, and, in company with Sigurd and Ghillie, the lads started next day to climb one of the highest mountains.

The forenoon was bright and glorious; then what shall I say of the view that was spread out before them when they gained the summit of that peak of snow? What shall I say? Why, simply confess my inability to do justice to it with this poor pen.

To the south, to the north, and east

"Hills on hills successive rise".

Amongst them is many a lake, many a rapid stream, and many a cataract, now ice-bound, for the hard frost is here as in Scotland.

Far down beneath is the city itself, with its mansions, its forts and battlements, and its great warehouses jutting into the water. The red roofs of many of the houses form a peculiar and beautiful feature of the view. Then beyond are the strangely-shaped islands, and, farther off still, the darkling, restless waves of the Northern Sea.

The scene on the whole was so wild and majestic that for a time Colin was silent. He was wrapped in admiration. Then the tears sprang to his eyes, and he turned right round and faced his friend.

"Thank you, Olaf; thank you," he said.

And, indeed, that was about all he could say just then. There are times, you know, when one's heart feels far too full for words, and this was the case at present with Colin.

Colin probably felt a little sorry that he had given way so far to his enthusiasm, though he need not have been. But your true Highlander, be he young or old, is ever ashamed of anything so effeminate as a tear. So he bent down low to pat and smooth Ghillie, and when he once more stood erect—Richard was himself again.

On board the little *Viking* once more, they leave the harbour and city of Bergen far behind, and with a light westerly breeze somewhat abaft the beam, they are steering northwards now. Sigurd keeps well out to sea. The voyage they are on is but a brief one; but the coast here is dangerous, and at any moment it might come on to blow and the little yacht be dashed upon the rocks to leeward.

Squalls may not come on quite so suddenly in these latitudes as in the Indian Ocean, but they are fierce and terrible enough when they do blow. Caution is one of the traits of the Norseman's character; it is a good quality. It is but right one should look before one leaps—only, I must add that when a Norwegian does make up his mind to leap, he does it with a will, and success is nearly always the reward of his daring.

Whither now was the *Viking* bound? If you look at a map of Norway you will speedily perceive that the whole of its northern and north-western coast is deeply indented by arms of the sea. It is a rock-bound and mountainous shore, and against these rocks the North Sea, backed up by the whole inconceivable force of the Atlantic, has been making war for ages. Its object would seem to be to suck Norway foot by foot beneath the ocean.

These arms of the sea are called in Scotland lochs; but here they are called fjords (pronounce the "j" in that word as if it were "y"). Some of these fjords run quite a long way into the interior—not always in a straight course, by any means—so that oftentimes they appear to be entirely land-locked.

It was for one of these that Sigurd in the *Viking* was now making.

Our heroes had left Bergen so early in the morning that the stars were still shining brightly overhead, and reflected in the dark waters of the bay. Few would have dared to go to sea at such an hour without a pilot. But Sigurd himself knew every landmark, and could have piloted a whole fleet of battle-ships safely out into the open water.

Before the afternoon sun had begun to decline in the south-west, the *Viking* was heading away for the fjord, and shortly afterwards entered it. But although the wind was now fair it had begun to go down with the sun, so that the *Viking's* progress was slow indeed.

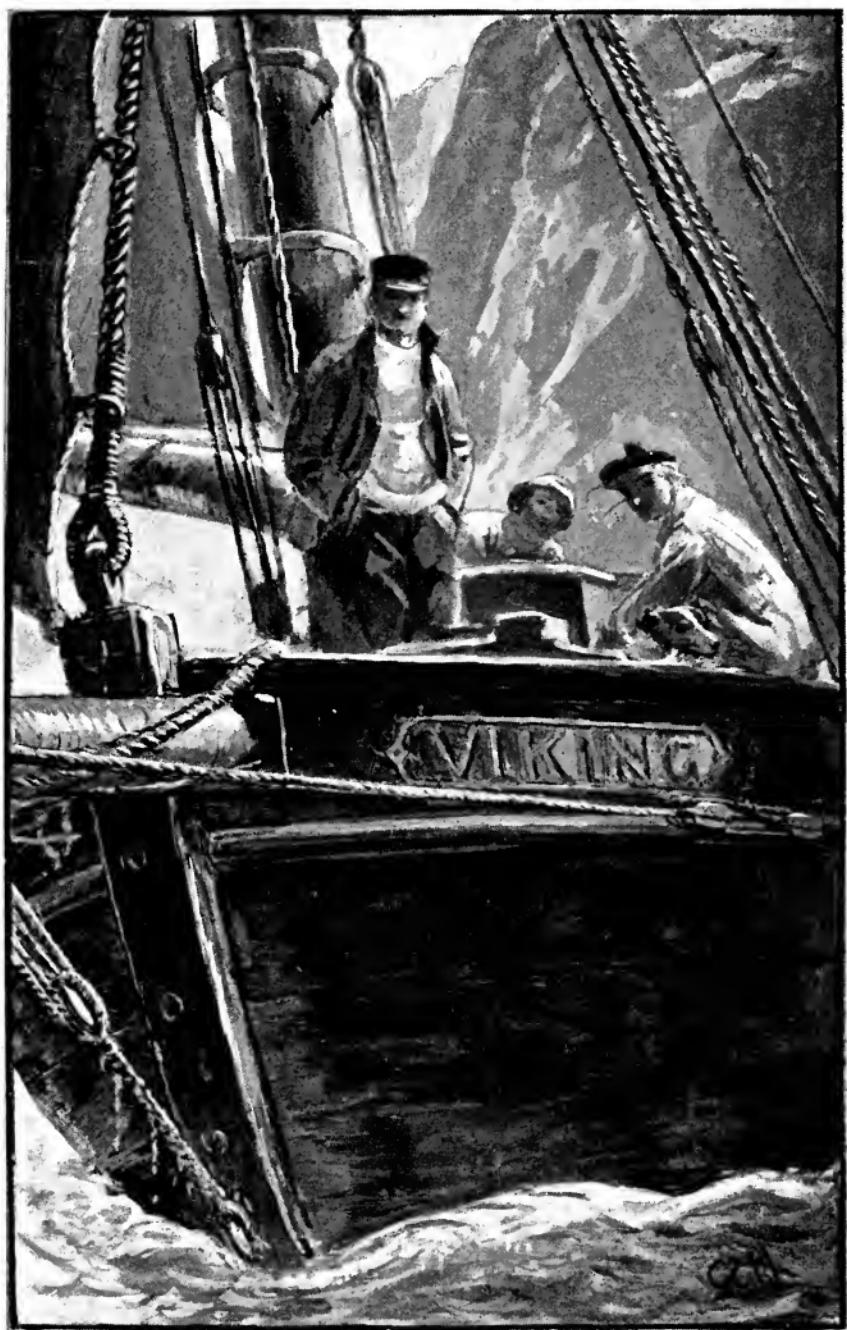
What a glorious scene was that now opening out before them! Perhaps "glorious" is scarcely the adjective I ought to use. It was a wild and gloomy picture. The fjord itself was but a narrow one; at its entrance probably not much over half a mile in width, and sometimes narrowing, sometimes widening as it went farther inland.

The rocks rose sheer up from the deep clear sea, forming black, wet, beetling precipices, with here and there a tiny waterfall, like a silver thread falling over them sheer down without a break into the water. One of these precipices might run inland for a hundred yards or more, then be cut up into a series of rocks that rose out of the waves like tiny mountains, and of all kinds of fantastic shapes and forms.

As the *Viking* sailed on, the wind fell more and more. The reefs had long since been shaken out, of course, and a larger jib set, yet even with this advantage, she was making barely two knots an hour.

But she had a dreamy, soul-soothing kind of motion as she rose and fell on the swell that nearly always rolls into these fjords. Colin, as he lay on deck wrapped up in his furs, liked it, and cared not how long he might take to reach his destination.

Gazing overboard down into the deep translucent water, he could see many kinds of fishes, some alone, and some in shoals; but what attracted and riveted his attention most were the dozens and scores of beautiful medusæ, or jelly-



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"IT SEEMED THAT THE *VIKING* WAS RUNNING STRAIGHT
TO DESTRUCTION."

fishes. These were sometimes as large as ladies' sunshades, and swam about in every direction: they floated lazily upwards; they dived or sunk; they swam in circles, and swam on their sides. It was while on their sides, that Colin noted with wonderment that, near the places where their strange, elongated, tentacular legs joined their bodies, they were studded and gemmed as with precious stones of every tint of the rainbow.

When tired of gazing down into the sea, Colin had but to cast his eyes upwards to sky or to rocks. The sea-birds were here in their thousands, for the nesting season had not yet commenced.

Seeing his friend so much astonished at the multitude of birds around them, Olaf placed his hand on his arm.

"Wait a little," he said, "you haven't seen half. Presently the fjord takes a bend. Have your field-glass focussed and ready. These birds are my wild pets, and I know them all—all."

It seemed, shortly afterwards, that the fjord had come to an end, and that the *Viking* was running straight to destruction against the cliffy rocks, but suddenly Sigurd gave an order, the boy put the helm hard down, and the little vessel came round and floated away in between two castellated rocks; and now the fjord grew wider, but the scenery none the less wildly beautiful. They could see the head of this strange ocean-loch now, although it was still five miles away.

It ended at a beach that was but an opening to a wide and romantic glen, adown which, with their glasses, the boys could notice a wild, tumultuous stream tossing and foaming in a series of cataracts as it made its way to the fjord. The stream was lined by woodlands that rose and rose to the hills on each side. The glen itself rose as it trended eastwards till it was backed by lofty rugged mountains, their white bosoms and summits glittering in the rays of the setting sun. The fjord just here was not all clear water. At each side the lofty rocks still rose sheer from the depths below, but here and there were little islands, some almost flat, others a mass of fantastic rockwork, as if Mother Nature had been amusing herself in her idle moments in

trying to fashion the curious and grotesque. But it was not these islands so much as their strangely-beautiful inhabitants that interested Colin most. These were birds—birds—birds!

Birds everywhere, clustering on the rocks, wheeling in the air, floating lazily on the swell, running on the beach—birds, birds everywhere. And yet the noise was not so loud and disagreeable as we sometimes hear it on islands on the western shores of Sutherland.

"The nesting time," said Olaf, "will soon be here, and so the birds are on their best behaviour."

"Why," said Colin, "those islands will be covered with eggs a little later on."

"True, Colin; you would scarce be able to walk on the lowest of the islands without doing damage, and so tame are the birds at times that they will scarcely move except to peck at your legs as you pass. But the beautiful feathered creatures you see yonder do not all build here," he continued. "O no; many species are but resting, and anon will go inland to the lakes among the silent hills."

The *Viking* had now got close enough to some of the islets for study, and, at a word from Olaf, Sigurd got the mainsail ashiver, and they were soon almost motionless on the water.

"Look, Colin, yonder on the little rock or boulder are some loons or black-throated divers. They will go inland. Eggs? Ah! I see that, like myself, you are interested in birds' nesting. They make a nest close to a pool, not unlike your wild ducks, though they lay but two brownish eggs, prettily mottled and dotted with black. The loon nearly always kills one of her chickens,¹ but becomes very fond of the other, and teaches it to dive by taking it on her back to the bottom of the water."

"Cruel mother!"

"Yes, but I always think the loons are half silly, and you would say the same if you knew them as well as I do.

"We do not find here either the red-necked or small loon,

¹ This statement should, I think, be taken with a grain of salt and a little vinegar. I am loath to believe that either the black-throated diver or great northern loon are so unnatural.

or the great northern loon. But I have found nests of both when Sigurd and I wandered far up towards the land of the Finns. It has only two eggs, of a yellowish colour, ticked with black.

"The grebes, Colin, are quite a large family with us on inland waters. O, you shall see them later on in their hundreds, and I always think they are among the loveliest water-birds we possess, but so shy it is almost impossible sometimes to study them.

"See yonder, in a row on the beach, are puffins. Funny birds, but very fierce at the nesting season. And higher up yonder are some guillemots. I don't know what they want here. They generally breed farther north, in Finland. We call them herring-hunters. Eggs? They don't lay eggs, and don't have a nest."

"What!"

"Well, they just lay one, and hatch it on the bare rock. A pretty egg it is, though. Sea-blue in colour, with spots of black and brown.

"See that droll bird yonder. No, to the right. That is our sea-swallow. It is the gannet. It tells the fisherman where the herring are. One egg only, but a nest of dried sea-weed and grass, and, though the egg is small compared to the size of the bird, it is shapely, and of a beautiful greenish-white colour."

"Why, Olaf, you are quite an ornithologist."

"I know nearly all the birds in Norway, Colin, by their shape, size, and plumage, by their nests alone, by their eggs alone, or by their songs and cries. It must seem to you that I am boasting, but then, Colin, remember I am but a wild-some boy myself, and have had birds and beasts as my companions since I could crawl."

I only wish I had space to tell you one half, or less than half, of all that Olaf told to Colin this evening. He was indeed a bird-lover, and here, near to these islands, he was in his element. But he rattled on as fast as his tongue could wag for well-nigh an hour, describing the appearance, the habits, the tricks and manners of gulls, such as the herring-gull, whose eggs are so numerous on the coast as to form quite an article of commerce, the Iceland and ivory

gulls, the black-backed and black-headed gulls, the skuas and terns, and last, but not least, the stormy petrel, or Mother Carey's chicken.

But now the sun had set behind the rocks and sea, the clouds in the west and south-west were of tints and colours more gorgeous than ever Colin remembered seeing, and—well, to descend from the sublime, I may tell you that Sigurd began to cough. The cough was what we may call a "put-on one", and was only meant to draw Olaf's attention to the fact that the light would soon fade.

"Fill the mainsail, Sigurd," said Olaf.

And away slipped the *Viking* once more, heading straight up the fjord. The wind had increased now to a gentle breeze, so that in less than an hour the *Viking* was safe at anchor within a gunshot of Olaf's own home.

The place where the anchor was let go, was a small bay to the land side of a tiny rocky island, so that she was perfectly secure, and could not possibly be driven on shore by any gale that could blow.

Olaf's house, or his mother's house, to speak more correctly, stood upon an eminence in the woodland, and quite overlooking the fjord. It was this very fact that prevented Mrs. Ranna from spending so much time in this beautiful place as she otherwise might have done. It had been Captain Ranna's custom always to run into the fjord on his return home from Greenland, and before going on to Bergen; and somehow, in autumn mornings, when gazing from her window away adown the dark loch, she had never been able to disabuse her mind of the idea that she might soon see the white sails of her dear husband's barque.

So, at whatever other time of the year Mrs. Ranna was to be found at her Norway home, she was never there in autumn.

The boys landed in their tiny dinghy, which was but little bigger than an ordinary-sized washing-tub, and pretty much of the same build.

There was along the sea-beach here quite a small colony of Norsemen and their families, who lived a kind of amphibious life. They were either on or in the water about half the year round, combining, as they did, various species of

fishing, seal-hunting on outlying rocks, bird-catching for their feathers, and egg-collecting, so that, upon the whole, they managed to make a very comfortable living.

And all the inhabitants of this humble hamlet turned out to welcome Olaf home, and great indeed was their rejoicing to see him so well, for they had heard he had been murdered and buried in a foreign land. They gave his friend Colin a hearty and most respectful welcome also.

Among those kindly people Colin noticed an old man and an oldish woman, who seemed to take more interest in Olaf than any of the others. They were, indeed, his principal housekeepers. His Elspet and his Murdoch, Olaf now called them.

Homeward with Colin marched Olaf, preceded by his retainers, and followed at some distance by many of the villagers, who apparently could not see enough of the young master.

Another thing that attracted their attention was Ghillie, the collie. They admired him much. In some respects he was not unlike their own dogs, although their ears were even more erect and shorter than Ghillie's, and their coats even shaggier. But Ghillie's face beamed with intelligence and affection, while in the faces of their own poor, ill-used, and badly-fed curs distrust and fear predominated.

A monkey's allowance is said to be a bit and a buffet. These dogs had many a buffet, but seldom a bit, saving the bones they picked up on the dunghill or the indigestible messes they found on the beach.

The path that led to Holtval House was a zigzag or winding one. It wound up through the pine-wood, and was covered with white sea-shells and sand. Then through the upright jaw-bones of a monster whale that formed an archway, the boys found themselves on level ground, and in front of a solid square-built house or mansion. Snow lay on the lawn and flower-beds, though the path that led to the house was clear, and in the season, no doubt, the garden would be charming enough.

For a whole week Colin and Olaf stayed at Holtval, and whether out of doors or in, both succeeded in thoroughly enjoying themselves.

What glorious possessions those are—youth and health! Our heroes had both, and during that week not a day passed that did not find them out on the water fishing or studying the wild birds. Then in the evening, in the old-fashioned parlour of the house, before a fire big enough to have roasted a sheep, Sigurd used to tell them stories of the far north, and sometimes the boys used to sing.

The old housekeepers, whom Olaf would call his Elspet and his Murdoch, used to come quietly in and sit on the edge of a daïs at a respectful distance, not only from the company, but from each other.

The parlour and almost every other room in the house contained mementos of poor Captain Ranna's Arctic travels. Bears' heads and paws decorated the walls, and so also did the stuffed heads of many species of seals. Whole skins of these same animals hung on the walls, lay on the floor, or were thrown carelessly over chair-backs and sofas.

At each side of the over-mantel in the dining-room there faced one the huge head, with goggle eyes and drooping tusks, of a gigantic walrus. In a corner stood the ivory spear of a narwhal or sea-unicorn, and here, there, and everywhere, in hall and in rooms, were clean and polished vertebræ of whales and skeletons of seals. Pictures of ships in various positions of danger, both among the ice and at sea, hung on the walls, and pictures, too, of every kind of Arctic scenery.

Indeed, from garret to basement this was the house of an Arctic sailor, and one, too, who had evidently loved his profession dearly.

But Olaf himself had added to this museum of wonders. The boy had studied ornithology, and taxidermy also, to some purpose, as the innumerable specimens of birds' eggs in cases under glass, and of stuffed sea-fowl, everywhere fully testified.

But *skilöbning* had not been forgotten, and now all preparations were made for a tour. Sigurd was to accompany the expedition, for it was to be a hunting as well as a skidding one.

Sigurd, after humming and hawing one evening for some time, delivered himself of the opinion that they should also take the Lapp lad with them.

"Just," he added, "as a kind of beast of burden."

To this proposal Olaf gladly consented. So the *Viking* was for a time placed in charge of a trustworthy fisherman.

The conduct of Olaf's retainers at the time of our heroes' departure in search of adventure and of the picturesque, was very much like that of Highland peasantry towards their lairds or chiefs on like occasions. A thousand blessings accompanied them as they took their way up towards the hills, and if prayers could insure their safe return, they certainly would come back to Holtval both happy and well.

Winter is not the season at which I should advise the ordinary tourist to visit Norway, yet at no time of the year is the wildly picturesque, nay, savage, nature of the scenery better displayed.

The explorers, as I may call them, made a journey of over thirty miles on the first day. This is not a big record certainly, but then, although the snow was good, the country they crossed was rough and difficult. There was a deal of uphill work to be done, and a good deal of forest work as well, so that it was almost sunset when they at length arrived at the head of a valley, in which was a village that, whether it possessed an inn or not, would at all events afford the tourists shelter.

Smoke was curling up in the evening air from many a hut and hamlet. Some distance higher up the brae was a house of greater pretensions. So, singing a song in which all could join, Olaf merrily led the way a-down the valley to the side of the frozen lake.

CHAPTER IX.

FACE TO FACE WITH A BEAR—ADVENTURES ON THE SNOW-CLAD WILDS—TORN TO PIECES BY WOLVES.

IT had been no part of Olaf's programme to pay a visit to the house on the hill. He knew they should all receive a hearty welcome from the villagers, whose hospitality, it is

well known, is quite on a par with that of the Scottish Highlanders.

Hearing a song rising lustily on the still air of evening and swelling up the mountain-side, the children of the village ran out of their sheilings, screaming at the top of their merry voices. And very soon their elders followed suit, and stood there wondering and shading their eyes with their palms from the dazzling glare of sunset light reflected down from the snow-clad hills.

Before our heroes, however, could reach the village, an old white-haired man, leaning on the arm of a beautiful young girl, emerged from the forest to the right, and stood right in their path.

The old man hailed them with uplifted arm, and Olaf pulled up.

"Hallo, *skilöbers!*" he cried in the Norse. "Right welcome to my little village. Get off your shoes, boys; dinner is waiting, and the fish will get cold."

The maiden laughed merrily, and our heroes made a virtue of obedience, and at once took off their *skier*. The villagers were a little disappointed, for they had expected a treat.

Well, it was just as the old man had said, for dinner was being dished.

The house was certainly far superior to the usual run of huts in which villagers dwell, and which consist generally of but one room, with fireplace, but no chimney, unless a hole in the roof can be dignified with that title, or of one room and a closet, which may be said to be the best bedroom, and smoke-room for fish, all in one.

Their host's house, however, contained many rooms. It was, indeed, a kind of mansion on a small scale, and the repast set before Olaf and Colin was both bountiful and nutritious.

The first course consisted of a kind of soup of game and vegetables. It was, indeed, an Irish stew without the pork. This was partaken of abundantly by all around the table, and with it slices of a dark kind of bread, which, despite its colour, was both wholesome and appetizing.

Next followed most excellent and well-cooked fish and

vegetables, with, strangely enough, tea for the ladies—the pretty fair-haired maid and her mother. The host himself partook of something far more potent. Perhaps his blood ran cold owing to his great age, which he told our heroes was considerably over ninety. The latter politely refused to join them, but did their duty by a couple of tankards of delicious milk that a servant placed beside their plates.

The last dish was a huge one, and occupied the centre of the round table.

"We eat this," said the old man, "in the true Norse style. Follow my example."

The dish consisted of thick sour milk, on top of which lay, or shall I say stood, a kind of clotted cream several inches deep. It was really very palatable and good, but as every one ate out of the same dish, the *modus operandi* was peculiar, to say the least of it.

Meanwhile, Sigurd and the Lapp lad had not been forgotten. They were in the adjoining room, and in the intervals of conversation could be heard talking and laughing right merrily with the servants who dined with them.

After dinner the young lady played on her piano, and sang a strange, but not unmusical kind of lilt or ballad of great length, which sent the old gentleman to sleep in his big straight-backed chair, and almost made Colin nod. The ballad was all in the Norse, so that he could understand only very little of it. But Olaf evidently enjoyed it immensely.

An adjournment, proposed by the old man himself, was afterwards made to the next room, and here, while smoking his pipe beside a roaring fire, and surrounded by many of his servants, as well as people from the village, who had dropped in promiscuously as it were, the patriarch related many a strange story, chiefly of the chase and of wild adventures among the mountains, that is, among the fjelds. His people listened entranced. Even Colin understood a good deal of what was said, and longed, as he listened, to emulate some of those doughty deeds. After this, one of the servants sung a very long droning ballad, which gave satisfaction to everybody save our Scotch hero.

Then the patriarch read from the Good Book, and prayed, and thus ended the evening.

After breakfast next day they were asked to prolong their stay, but thanking the good people kindly with many a *Tak fur maton*,¹ they received the patriarch's blessing and left. As he shook hands with the flaxen-haired maiden, Colin thought he could perceive tears in her blue eyes, but then even he may have been mistaken.

On northwards now they went for many days, never, however, sleeping in caves or under the snow-laden trees, for, sparsely cultivated though the country is, they always managed to find shelter at night. Their accommodation was poor enough at times. They were always pleased when they found what might be called a house above their heads. Sometimes, however, the house was the merest hut, and sometimes the hut was the merest hovel.

Their strange journey lay on elevated land 'twixt the coast and a range of mountains that were beautiful indeed, but savage in the extreme. There were great forest lands also to be skidded through, but there was no fear of being accosted here by keepers.

When three or four days out, and well up towards the north, Colin had an adventure with a bear that was all but putting an end to his career for ever and aye. He was some distance ahead of his party and close to the edge of the forest,—which he was about to enter, as they were then travelling as much as possible in a bee-line,—when he noticed Mr. Bruin in the wood. He was a huge, brownish, very shaggy monster, and looked lean along the back.

He certainly was hungry, and probably thought that there would be some very tender pickings on a young fellow like Colin.

Now, as we already know, Colin was a good shot, but his hands this afternoon were so cold as to be practically useless. The monster was on him before he could fire a second time—he had fired once and missed. The roar that Bruin gave as he sprang upon his intended victim would have terrified and paralysed a lad of less nerve, but Colin stood his ground

¹ Thanks for the good fare or food.

and struck out manfully with the butt-end of his rifle. The blow told home on the beast's head.

Ill would it have fared, however, with Colin, had not at that very moment Sigurd, knife in hand, closed with Bruin.

A man and bear fight? Yes, but it lasted but for a few seconds, for Sigurd knew where to hit, and the bear was soon lying dead enough on the snow. He was skinned, and the trophy was rolled up and given to the Lapp lad to carry.

Strange to say, they killed two more bears in this very wood—with their guns, and not at close quarters—that afternoon. It seemed, therefore, that they were on the edge of a Bruin-haunted forest. Getting through it at last, they crossed a frozen lake, crossed a hill, passed through another forest, then descending by the side of a half-frozen stream that formed cataract after cataract, they presently found themselves at the top of a fjord of singularly wild aspect. Here, however, was a village, and, as luck would have it, a village inn.

Before he consented to stay here, however, Olaf disposed of his bear-skins to the landlord, which showed he had a good head for business. Then he bargained for his night's board and that of his party.

The inn was a sturdy, square, log building, and could boast of several fairly good bed-rooms, for in the sweet summer-time, when woods and fields were green, and the hills carpeted with flowers, many tourists made the inn their home.

Before leaving in the morning our *skilöbers* replenished their haversacks with the very best food that was procurable in the village, for in the more rural districts or small towns at the side of the fjords, they had to rough it severely in the matter of food as well as accommodation. Their best beds were often but a deal plank or bench beside the fire, their bed-clothes only their plaids, and their bed-fellows—whisper it—fleas.

To add to the discomfort the fire—which was a necessity, so hard was the frost—usually filled the place with stifling wood-smoke, so that the only way they could sleep in com-

fort was by covering the head and face entirely up with a single fold of the useful plaid.

But seldom, indeed, could the good and kindly peasantry be prevailed upon to accept any money, for the food and accommodation that our heroes received. When they did so, it was with such reluctance that it was evident enough they imagined that the money would bring them bad luck.

About a fortnight after their start they found themselves very far north indeed, and now the country was becoming even more sparsely inhabited and, if anything, wilder. They came one evening to a village near to a great inland lake, and were somewhat surprised to find so many people assembled; but they soon found out that a great *ski-ing* race was to be held on the morrow, and a feast of venison in the evening. So our little party determined to stay for the sports.

First came the races, and not only Olaf and Sigurd, but Colin himself entered for these.

They had a long climb to the starting-point, which was high up in the forest. The course was a mile long, and downhill all the way, though not dangerously so. The snow was in famous condition, so that the racing was very exciting indeed.

Olaf won easily, race after race, till at last competitors would only enter on the condition that he should be handicapped.

Sigurd and the "beast of burden", or Lapp lad—it really was cruel to designate him so, but no insult was meant,—were more clumsy, and as for Colin, he entered for the races freely enough, but somehow he always managed to lose first his head and then his feet, and so got beautifully rolled out of it. Never mind, he enjoyed the fun as much as anybody, and was just as hungry at eventide when the great feast of elk came on.

The elk was well cooked, but having only been killed a day or two before, it was somewhat tough. However, hunger is sweet sauce. So our boys managed to make a fairly good meal.

But how shall I describe the performances of Sigurd and

that Lapp lad. I should try in vain. I will only give them the credit of eating slowly. But had they been eating for a wager, they could not have kept it up longer. It seemed a dreadfully serious matter with the pair of them, and I really think that if they had not touched food again for a week they would not have died of starvation.

The sleeping accommodation that night was on benches in a large barn-like house. But Colin slept but little, for every bench had a pair, at least, of sleepers thereon, and as every one of these snored in a different key, I need hardly say that the music they made was not conducive to dreamless slumber.

Next day our heroes joined a party of elk-hunters, who were going to run these antlered monarchs of the north down on *skier*, and the sport promised to be very good.

Some of the *skier* worn by the hunters were nearly ten feet long, with fastenings of the very roughest description. They were comparatively narrow, that is, they corresponded in breadth of beam to that of the wearer's boot. Now, as a Norseman, though not usually very tall, wears a large and useful foot—no, I don't mean boot—their *skier* were quite as broad as those of Olaf or Colin.

The journey was a long one, and the travelling was somewhat arduous.

How pleased our heroes must have been that they brought Ghillie, the collie, with them, may be learned from the following instance of the honest dog's extreme sagacity. It was in a snow-bound wood where the party was *ski-löbning*.

"Is it all safe?" Olaf had just sang out to those behind.

"All safe," was the reply that came back down the wind. Olaf, as usual, was a considerable distance ahead, but none of the party were going at any great rate, although descending a hill. Suddenly the dog, who was leading, began to bark in a most frantic manner. It was well for Olaf, well for all, indeed, that the hint was taken. Our young Norse hero stopped himself with his pole. None too soon; he was on the very brink of a fearful chasm, so close indeed that it was with some difficulty he got away, and the snow

dislodged by his feet actually rolled over the brink into space.

The elk-hunters that day managed to secure five of these animals, and four more fell to the guns of Colin and Olaf. The hunters were therefore very happy, for not only would they have pickled meat for many a day, but skins wherewith to make caps and gloves. Indeed, every portion of this wild deer is made use of, even the very hoofs being boiled down to make glue.

The day had not passed over without another adventure which, but for the ready use Colin made of his rifle, would assuredly have ended fatally to one of the hunters. One of the elks after being wounded turned fiercely at bay. In trying to escape its vengeance a hunter fell. The beast in its fury fell over the man, thus missing its aim. Before it could arrange for another blow Colin fired, though at the risk killing the man, who now crawled out from under the dead deer, unhurt certainly, yet very much frightened.

But though the elk is thus made the subject of good sport in winter by the Norseman, and thereby affords them food and many comforts besides, the autumn is the usual hunting season.

Not far from the place where the last elk was killed was a little village, and here the whole party found shelter for the night. This village could boast of a large amusement hall. It had been built by the head man of the place, whose house was high up on the hill, and a very pretentious kind of a mansion it was.

The owner was a mighty hunter—a kind of nor'land Nimrod—and after dinner he entertained Colin and Olaf with many a strange story of his adventures.

What a pleasure it would have been to a naturalist to have met with such a man as this, for although he might have been unable to give the Latin names for any of the denizens of the wilds, or tell their proper classification, there was not a creature in hair, fur, or feather that he did not know the habits of. And no wonder, for Kristiansen, as he was called, had lived in the wilds nearly all his life, and his

name was well known to every sportsman from one end of Norway to the other.

"Ah!" he said, in the course of conversation, "reindeer shooting is not now quite what it was in my young days. There is here in Norway too much game preserving as in your country, young sir. But in my time I have killed five great deer in one day, and with an ordinary muzzle-loading rifle too. Had I possessed weapons like yours, young gentlemen, I should have required half a dozen men to bear home the skins of the deer I should have killed."

"Good sport? I should think it was. And I have never heard or known of any that is, or, let me say, was, more healthful and bracing. What limbs we used to have on us in those days to be sure, and what appetites. Ah! I am getting old now, and there are times when I can neither eat much nor sleep much. But in these days it would have astonished you to see the suppers we put under our belts, and as for sleep, why our heads were no sooner down than we were off. Awoke refreshed though, always; then a dip in the nearest stream, or five minutes of a shower-bath under the edge of a waterfall, made men of us, and after breakfast we were off to the hills again."

"Young sir," he continued, addressing Colin, "you have come at the wrong time of the year to see our wild and beautiful land at its best. Three months later on—about the middle of May—then summer bursts upon us all in a week, arrayed in a ferny and floral beauty that would dazzle your eyes, and our pine-trees are green, our spruces fingered over with shoots of the tenderest emerald, our larches all in tassels and buds of brightest crimson, and ferns and fox-gloves growing and waving in every woodland. Our streams, our lakes, our innumerable waterfalls never look to greater advantage than they do in later May, nor our rolling woods, nor our hills and snow-peaked mountains. Oh! a Norseland spring is a joyous, gladsome time."

"And your song-birds," said Colin; "your woodlands must then be filled with bird-song?"

"Ah! yes; our song-birds have ever been favourites of mine."

He ceased talking for a moment or two, his eyes following the clouds of tobacco-smoke that went curling ceiling-wards from his enormous pipe.

"I can hardly say which of all the song-birds of our nor'land woods and hills is my especial favourite. I have travelled much in Scotland, and, though I may be prejudiced, I cannot help thinking that our thrushes sing more merrily than yours, and that our blackbirds flute more melodiously. The reason may be that here in Norway we have few, if any, bird-catchers, and so the birds have greater peace."

"Then our warblers, they are at least five times as numerous as yours, and sweetly indeed they sing. And our swallows warble very sweetly too. But our pipits also are delightful, and away on some of the quiet sunny uplands or grassy table-lands, it is a heavenly treat to lie and listen to the melody of the skylark."

This old sportsman and naturalist, I should mention, had travelled much in Britain, and could talk very good English indeed.

"Yes," he said, "the song of the lark is a marvellous performance, even if we but take into consideration the power it possesses of keeping up the melody so long, every note clear and ringing to the very last plaintive wail as it descends to the grass some distance from—never quite close to—the spot where his liquid-eyed and lovely mate sits close on those brown eggs of hers, her bonnie breast wet mayhap with the morning dews. Is it not your poet Shakespeare who sings:

"Hark, hark, the lark at heaven's gate sings,
And Phœbus 'gins arise,
His steeds to water at those springs
On chaliced flowers that lies ;
And winking Mary-buds begin
To ope their golden eyes."

Ghillie was standing beside the naturalist, his head upon his knee. The old man was gently caressing him.

"Every dog loves me," he said, "but this breed is one I

dearly love, although I fear that in the sporting field he would be of but little use.

"But your England and your Scotland too are the homes for good dogs. Ah! old as I am, and I am bordering on eighty, I still go to the hill at times, though I do not see so well now, nor can I walk so far; but some day I promise myself the treat to visit your Highlands, young sir, and bring back with me some of your great deerhounds."

"My uncle and I will be delighted to have you as a guest," said Colin enthusiastically.

"Thanks, a thousand."

"But, tell me, sir, have you still the lynx in Norway?"

"Ah, we had a kind of lynx long ago in this country, and a wild and ferocious animal he was. I have killed them, and they have slain my dogs. It dwells, or used to dwell, in the wilder and more lonesome mountain recesses. We have the wolf also. They, too, are getting rare. But a lynx will lay dead the largest wolf we ever see in Norway, and suck his blood afterwards; but its usual food is the grouse, the ptarmigan, and sometimes the capercailzie."

"Yes, we too have the capercailzie in our Scottish forests, a kind of wild turkey we may call it, that lives much in trees."

"True, and runs much upon the ground."

"And the fox, sir; you have that wild animal?"

"Yes, we have two kinds; we have the common fox of your native land, and we have also, farther to the north, the Arctic fox, which, as you doubtless know, is smaller than the other, and becomes pure white in winter."

"But you do not pursue it with hounds and horses as they do in England?"

"No, young sir, it would be as impossible thus to hunt the fox in Norway as in your own wild Scottish Highlands."

"And now, gentlemen, a certain degree of weariness, incidental to men of my age at this time of the night, tells me it is bed-time. What say you, to take your candles?"

"Good-night, then. Sound sleep, and angels watch around your pillow."

When our heroes were awakened next morning by the servant, who told them that breakfast was nearly ready, Olaf called to the man to come in.

He entered, bearing a lighted lamp, which he placed upon the table.

"My good man," said Olaf in Norse, "are you sure that you have not made a mistake? Is it usual for people in your part of the country to get up in the middle of the night?"

"We are snowed up almost," answered the man; "and listen to the wind, young gentlemen. Ha! it will be days before you leave our house. But master will indeed be pleased to have you."

The wind was howling around the house in a most mournful and dreary manner, and the cold was intense. Olaf pulled up the blind, and held the lamp to the window that Colin might see. Every pane of glass was frozen with the thickest frost-flowers ever he had seen. No wonder Colin lay back for a few minutes and covered his head with the warm bed-clothes.

The lamps were burning on the breakfast-table when they entered the room. A splendid fire was roaring on the low hearth, and their host advanced with a most kindly smile on his still handsome face to bid them good-morning.

"Ah!" he said laughing, "you will be prisoners here for days. And I am quite pleased; so make yourselves at home."

"That we will," said Colin; "and I assure you, sir, I am also pleased to have this break in our journey, and to have such delightful company as yours."

"And now be seated. Eat and live."

They did eat, and they felt very like living indeed. Only they would have much preferred life out of doors. This, however, was not to be thought of for the present. Seldom even in his own wild land had Colin heard the snow-wind howl as it howled to-day around the naturalist's house and through the woods. It blew a blizzard, indeed, that the strongest man could not have stood against. The air was filled with ice-dust, the thermometer in the natura-

list's hall stood three degrees below zero, and any attempt at an excursion beyond the gates would have meant suffocation.

For some time after breakfast their host buried himself behind the clouds of smoke that he raised from his pipe. Then he pulled himself together as it were.

"I fear," he said smiling, "I am but a poor entertainer."

"Not at all!" said Olaf and Colin speaking simultaneously.

Then the old man launched out into what he called snow stories, and told them of the many escapes he had had in mountain districts long, long ago. So interested were the boys that they took no heed of time, and servants came in to lay the table for the early dinner before, apparently, the breakfast had been cleared away.

There was no abatement in the violence of this terrible storm for two whole days. Even when the sun did descend to shine at last, and the wind had ceased to blow, our heroes found that the roads were entirely blocked with snow, and much of the country seemingly impassable, so that a detention of four or five days more in this hospitable Norse home was imperative.

"How glad we may be to find ourselves here," Colin said more than once.

"Ah! yes," said Kristiansen, "you are lucky, as the saying is, though I myself believe not in chance nor luck. It was Providence that led you here, lads, depend upon it. But for the kindness of God, your bodies might at this moment be lying on the fjelds, or torn to pieces by hungry wolves."

"You have had many adventures with wolves, sir?"

"They are ugly customers," said the old sportsman, "when rendered savage by hunger and starvation. It is in snow-time they are most fierce and dangerous, when they destroy the elk and the reindeer, and even sheep. They often lay wait for the deer near a frozen lake, and are wily enough to lead them on to the ice, where they flounder about and become an easy prey to these fiends incarnate."

"They will even kill and devour dogs when pressed with hunger, and have been known to attack a village and keep the people prisoners in their houses for days.

"Heigho!" he continued, "it does not seem more than a year ago, and yet it is twenty since I left my poor faithful serving-man sick in a sheltered cave high among the hills, I had no idea there were wolves around, and had gone to look for venison. The poor fellow told me he could sleep, and that by the time I returned he would be fit for the hill again.

"Alas! sleep he did, and it was the sleep of death. It still wanted two hours of sunset when I returned, and the sight that met my gaze as I came near the cave was one I am never likely to forget. I felt faint, I staggered and leaned on my pole, else I should have fallen. My poor faithful Jan was literally torn to fragments, which were scattered about everywhere, but more than half devoured.

"There were evidences, too, of a terrible struggle having taken place. Here lay Jan's broken pole, and yonder the hand that had held it. O, it was sickening, and there was blood, blood, everywhere on the trampled snow! And though blood upon snow is brown, it is none the less fearsome if it be the blood of one you have loved and cared for. I trust in the Lord, young friends, you may never have so terrible an experience."

CHAPTER X.

AMONG THE WANDERING LAPPS—THE COMING OF SUMMER.

THREE weeks after this we find our heroes far away up in Finland itself. They have followed the snow, for though spring is already showing signs of its advent down in the south, here in this wild land winter still reigns secure.

We left them at the house of the old hunter and naturalist, Kristiansen. We left them storm-stayed, and for a time it

was thought that they must abandon any attempt to penetrate farther north. They had held a council, and had even asked the old man's advice.

"I shall withhold it," he answered, burying himself in a cloud of smoke, "until I hear what you yourselves will say."

Sigurd's opinion was that the journey would be extremely hazardous, if not indeed impossible, for the crevasses would be filled up with soft snow, into which they might slip and be seen no more.

Asked for his opinion, Colin gave it in a very few words. "Whate'er a man dares he can do."

Olaf also thought it could be managed by using caution.

The Lapp lad said with a shrug of his broad shoulders and a grin from ear to ear, "I'll follow my master if it should be over a cliff or a cataract."

"What do you say, Ghillie?" said the old hunter at last.

"Wowf! wowf!" barked Ghillie joyously.

"I think the dog is right," said their host.

This was certainly talking like an oracle, for the dog's bark, although it certainly sounded like a willing and joyous one, might have meant anything.

A wild and dangerous journey it had been. Away on the uplands the ground was blown pretty clear of snow, but here were many precipices half hidden, which to venture near might have meant an ugly death, so the progress was naturally slow. Once they crossed a glacier which seemed to have no end, and here, too, it was bitterly, piercingly cold. They got lower down among the glens after this, where here and there they found the shelter of stunted woods and forests. Several times they had to bivouac all night under trees!

Nothing, indeed, but the determined will of Britons or Norsemen could have enabled them to bear up against such hardships. In the higher regions, too, which they often crossed in order to make their line of march as straight and short as possible, there was frost-bite to be guarded against;

and this was an experience that each in turn had a taste of, and a bitter one it is, as I myself can testify.

As to sport, this was fairly good. Too good, the Lapp lad would have said, if asked, for he had to carry the skins. They shot more than one bear, besides several foxes, and more than one otter. They saw no wolves, and although they spent a whole day in a ravine high up among the hills, where they had been told these terrible animals resided, they did not even catch sight of one.

Elk and reindeer they stalked and shot in abundance, but took away with them only the skins and the tongues; but when anywhere near a village the inhabitants were only too glad to go back on the track and bring in the carcases.

And now, here they were among Lapps; only in a kind of temporary hamlet, however, for the tribe they found themselves bivouacked with were a wandering one. Hospitable these squat and far-from-handsome men undoubtedly were, but the huts they dwelt in, from an Englishman's point of view, would have been called squalid in the extreme.

It was for the most part reindeer that these Lapps were in pursuit of, but nevertheless they hunted and killed all kinds of animals, from bears to marmots. To their intense joy Colin and Olaf found that they had indeed arrived in a kind of hunter's paradise. The Lapps were none the less rejoiced. They had seen men with guns before, but never men carrying arms of such remarkable precision as those our heroes possessed. They looked upon them, therefore, as a great acquisition, and hardly knew how kind to be to them.

They gave their young guests the first and best of everything, including the fattest and choicest morsels of stewed reindeer, fresh from the pot, and served up by the hands—I cannot say fair hands—of daughter or mistress herself.

The dogs with which the Lapps ran down the deer, which they afterwards finished off with their spears and knives, were a wretched, half-wild pack. For a time they could scarcely make out what kind of animal Ghillie was, and one prick-eared cur went so far as to insult the collie. Then Ghillie's Scotch blood got up, and he soon let them see what sort of animal he was. After this there was peace.

It was not only shooting and *skilöbning* that our heroes enjoyed in this rude but hospitable settlement, but sleighing as well, behind the reindeer. Olaf ventured on board one of these coffin-shaped sledges first. The fiery steed was prettily caparisoned in trappings of red and black, and no sooner was he fastened to the vehicle than he evinced an inclination to be off. Olaf was already half-repentant, but he could not now draw back with honour; so he quickly seated himself, the reins were handed to him, and away he flew.

But whither? Well, this was a question that till now he had not thought of settling. He must do so soon, however, for he was being dragged along at a tremendous rate, and in a few minutes was miles from the encampment.

The sensation was exceedingly pleasant—entrancing, he called it, when afterwards describing it to Colin. This was when he was trying to induce his friend to embark and go for a ride of the same kind. But there was one portion of his experience he kept to himself until some time afterwards. It was as follows:

After he had got far away from camp, and was crossing a wide and lonesome lake, the reindeer suddenly slackened his pace and looked round.

"Go on," cried Olaf, in Norse.

Then that reindeer lost his temper, and turned upon his driver. But Olaf knew exactly what to do. In a moment he had tumbled himself out of the sledge and turned it right over him. The reindeer spent his fury on the tough bottom of the sledge, almost broke one horn, gave himself a headache, then backed off, apparently sick and sorry for it. Then Olaf took his steed in charge once more, and after riding a few miles managed to turn and head for the encampment, which he reached in safety.

But Colin's experience was by no means a dangerous one. The same deer dragged him, but went easy all the way, and made no attempt to turn and rip him up. Perhaps the beast had not quite recovered from his headache.

These tame reindeer are kept in droves by the Lapps, and guarded or herded together by men and dogs. Perhaps if

these semi-savages were kinder to their canine friends and fed them better, they would do better work. As it is, one well-trained Scotch sheep-dog could do the work of a dozen such curs.

There were signs now that the spring was advancing even as far as this northern land, so our heroes bade their kind entertainers farewell, and journeyed on a day's journey farther, to gaze on the Polar Ocean from the shore.

It was, I need hardly say, with feelings akin to awe that Olaf and his little party stood on a terrible cliff-top one day and gazed Pole-wards over the black waters of that heaving sea. The rocks rose almost sheer up from the ocean to a height of about one thousand feet. Not a sound was here to be heard, except the sullen moan of the breakers far beneath and the mournful cry of the sea-birds. The sea itself was open as far as the eye could reach, only here and there lay pieces of ice, some clad in virgin snow, others clear and green and wave-washed.

It was a solitary, but a solemn and impressive scene.

“Here rocks on rocks in mist and storm arrayed,
Stretch far to sea their giant colonnade,
With many a cavern seamed, the dreary haunt
Of the dim seal and swarthy cormorant;
Wild round their rifted brows with frequent cry
As of lament, the gulls and gannets fly,
And from their sable base, with sullen sound,
In sheets of whitening foam the waves rebound.”

Yet, dreary though the scene was, Colin could not help gazing almost lovingly towards the invisible beyond. The glamour of the ice-king was still around him.

“Olaf,” he said at last, laughing as he spoke, “you will think me a fool, but I feel under a spell, and I'd give all I possess—though tha' need excite envy in no one—to visit those far-off lands that lie around the Pole.”

“Lands?” said Olaf, talking as if to himself. “Lands! I think we will find when we get there that they are seas, not lands. Perhaps!”

Colin touched his friend on the shoulder, for Olaf was not looking in his direction as he spoke, but to the north.

"Were you speaking to me, Olaf?"

"I hardly know what I did say."

"But I did; and, Olaf, I shall not forget it."

After one more longing, lingering look seawards, they retraced their steps, and went slowly southwards.

In a few weeks' time, for the snow was now soft, and formed but a poor surface for *skilöbning* over, they found themselves back once again at the little glen where the kindly old naturalist dwelt.

"And now," he said, after he had given them a kindly welcome, "having once more possessed myself of you, I mean to keep you till spring comes. Your time is your own?"

"True," said Colin; "in a great measure it is, because we are abroad on a holiday, and no one at home will expect us until they see us again; but we should be trespassing on your kindness."

"On the contrary, young friends, the kindness will all be on your side. By staying, you will be doing an old man a real favour."

Argument like this was unassailable.

"O," continued the aged hunter, "you will not have a great while to wait for summer even. In this far north land our spring is little more than a name; summer quickly displaces it, as it comes in with one glad bound, driving the snows from off the plains, and causing them to seek shelter on the summits and hollows of the highest hills, clothing all our lowlands with flowers and verdure, draping our trees, ay, and the very rocks, with beauty. Yes, I know I am an enthusiast; but so is every true mountaineer, be he Scotch, or Norse, or Swiss."

So our heroes stayed on here until the spring and early summer arrived.

But *skilöbning* was now over for the season, for soon the little snow that was left in the glens melted and helped to swell the river that, aided in its course by many a linn or waterfall, went roaring to the lake. This lake was a fresh-water one, although it was not a great way from a fjord, and it teemed with fish.

The weather now became remarkably mild and balmy, and even Kristiansen himself thought it no hardship, but a pleasure, to accompany the boys to the lake on their fishing expeditions. Only on dry days, however, did he come; and it must be confessed that there were many wet ones, days when the rain fell straight down from the skies in corded sheets, till one could not help wondering where all the water came from. But our heroes were well provided with waterproof outer garments, and rain seemed only to make the fish more hungry.

The lake was a large one, and much longer than wide. Moreover, it went winding in and out among the woodlands and hills, now turning golden and verdant, until it appeared quite to lose itself in a pale haze.

Olaf and Colin used to take luncheon with them sometimes, that is, when they intended to stay long away, and here in the lake was many a little wooded isle where they could land, and, after dining, enjoy to the full the mid-day siesta.

The longer they lived in the valley the more charming did it appear to become. Summer was indeed with them now, and all the land rejoiced. The woods were filled with bird-music, and there were flowers everywhere.

Both Colin and his friend were fond of wild flowers—what brave heart is not?—but Colin was no botanist, while Olaf was. They took together many excursions far away, and then Olaf could study the Alpine flora to his heart's content.

But if he could not name and classify the wild flowers, Colin could assist in collecting them; and he was delighted also to find in these higher regions not only plants and shrubs, such as the juniper, the wild myrtle, and many others, but birds also that reminded him of his native land. For here were the red grouse and the cunning but beautiful lapwing, the black cock and the plover, the coot and wild duck, and the ptarmigan.

When, however, as they were returning from the hills one evening—but the day was really so long now that evening is almost a misnomer,—they heard the sweet song

of the northern nightingale in a spruce thicket, they knew that it must be far on in May, and that it was time they were returning to their more southern home by the fjord.

How sweet that bird sang! Life and love and energy seemed all thrown into that entrancing lilt, and still in some measure it was not unlike that of our own English nightingale. Here is this song of the northern bird. If the reader is clever enough he can set it to music—the music of Philomel:—

“Tyun, tyun, tyun, tyun
 Spi tui zqua,
Tyō¹, tyō, tyō, tyō, tyō, tyō, tix;
 Qutio, qutio, qutio, quitio,
Zquō, zquo, zquo, zquo
Tzy, tzy, tzy, tzy, tzy, tzy, tzy, tzy, tzy,
 Quorrox tui zqua pipiquisi.”

The longest time has an end, be it pleasant or sad, and the end of June saw our heroes once more on board the saucy little *Viking*, and bearing up for bonnie Scotland.

“But as long as I live,” said Colin to Olaf, “I shall never forget my visit to your wild and beautiful country, nor the many delightful and kind people we have met.”

“And you are envious?”

“Of some things, certainly. I envy you the possession of so many waterfalls, and game birds, and the fish that teem in your rivers and lakes. I am not sure but that I envy you also those gloomy, savage fjords of yours. We have nothing in Scotland that comes quite up to these.

“And,” he continued, “I should like to import a few hundreds of your nightingales and set them free in our woods.

‘Tyō, tyō, tyō, tyō.’

These mournful notes are ringing in my ears still, and will, dear Olaf, lad, for many and many a day.”

¹ The “tyō” is a long-drawn and plaintive note.



BOOK II.

ON GREENLAND'S ICY MOUNTAINS.

CHAPTER I.

NORTH AND AWAY TO THE SEA OF ICE.

WHAT I want," said Captain Reynolds, bringing his little red fist down on the saloon table with a bang, but a very good-natured bang—"what I want, boys, is a bumper ship. I want to come into Fraserburgh here again with a *voyage*¹ that will open my owners' eyes."

He knocked the table again and looked defiantly across at Rudland Syme, who was laughing quietly to himself.

"You never saw a bumper ship, doctor," he added. "Last time you sailed with me was an unfortunate year."

"O no, Captain Reynolds, it was most fortunate, I think. Don't you remember that we had some beautiful cases of pleurisy, lots of frost-bite, three accidents, and an amputation? How can you talk so?"

Reynolds turned round to our old friend, Uncle Tom, who was near him on the locker, and addressed him.

"A bumper ship, Captain Jones. I want this dear old *Bladder-nose* to be full up to the tanks, full to the hatches with skins, and a bing on the deck 'twixt main and fore, half as high as the main-mast!"

¹ A "voyage" in this sense means a heavy cargo, and when Reynolds talks of "my" owners he means the owners of the ship. Greenland-going sailors have many expressions that are peculiarly their own.—G. S.

"Bravo, Captain Reynolds!" put in Rudland Syme.

"Yes, and I mean to try to work it too," continued the skipper, simply waving his hand towards Syme as if to tell him to keep quiet. "And I won't merely try; I'll do it. The *Bladder-nose* and I have been a bumper ship before now, and we shall again, with the blessing of Providence."

"Well," said Uncle Tom right pleasantly, "I really hope you will have the luck I feel sure you deserve."

"Thank you, thank you, Captain Jones. Now, you see, my plan is this. We shall slip away easily a whole week at least before the other ships get their beef hung in the tops. 'What's old Reynolds up to this year?' some of them will say. But I'll only laugh in my sleeve. 'You leave old Reynolds alone,' I'll say to myself; 'he knows his way about.' Well, sir, I'll slip away up north to Lerwick. There won't be a Greenlander anywhere in sight when I drop my anchor in Bressa Sound. Then I'll go on shore and simply take my pick of the Lerwick men—engage all the best. Do you follow me, sir?"

"I do. You talk like a book."

"Yes, sir, and before the other ships come in I'll be off. 'Have you seen anything of old Reynolds?' the skippers will ask the innkeeper. 'Och,' the innkeeper will say, 'he is half-ways to the country¹ by now!' 'O,' the steam-boat skippers will reply, 'we'll soon catch him up, though we should be here a fortnight. Nothing like steam.'

"But, Captain Jones, you should just see my dear old *Bladder-nose* on a wind. O, can't she rip through it just, and can't my mate carry on too! No, sir, not the slightest danger of carrying anything away. Masts were never made before of such timber as ours are, sticks were never better stepped. You haven't been round her yet, sir. Well, it is too dark to-night, but to-morrow you shall see our bowsprit and jibboom.

"But, as I was saying, sir, we'll slip away to 'the country' and steer north and east, keeping fairly well off the pack-ice for fear of getting nipped. North and east, north and east, just the way the ice trends, you know, till one fine day my

¹ By "the country" is meant the sea of ice.

mate will pop his nose over the nest and shout down, ‘Seals ahead, sir, coming this way in thousands, sir; sea is black with them.’ And, sir, that will be fortune coming for me and my owners. All we’ll have to do will be to ‘bout ship and follow the seals till they take the low ice farther down south. Then we’ll do nothing but dodge and wait till the puppies are born and grow big enough to make a voyage. See it all, don’t you, sir?’

“Yes, and I hope it will all turn out just as you describe it. Ah! Mr. Reynolds, I only wish I was two hundred years younger, I’d go with you myself. But sunnier seas suit my limbs best now.”

“Well, that just reminds me of what I was going to say when I began, sir. I don’t mind whom I take with me, so long as they can jump and shoot.”

Uncle Tom laughed a happy, contented kind of laugh, as he pointed to our heroes, Colin and Olaf, who were sipping their coffee beside the doctor at the other side of the table.

“There,” he said, “you’ve got the right stuff. Olaf yonder, and Colin, too, are crack shots, and first-rate she—she—what do you call it, boys?”

“Skilöbers,” said Olaf smiling.

“She-lovers,” said Uncle Tom. “Well, last winter, sir, with Sigurd and a Lapp boy, they travelled all the way to Finland from Bergen. Can you beat that?”

“Boys, I’ll have you! I’ll rate you as—let me see. We shall want a kind of special rating, sha’n’t we? Assistant harpooners—that will do? Wages—”

“O, we don’t want wages.”

“Ah! but you must. We’re not allowed to carry passengers. Wages—two pounds ten a month and all your rations, with half a crown for every ton of oil and five shillings for every hundred skins. Now, how does that strike you?”

Olaf’s eyes sparkled with delight.

Colin heaved a satisfied kind of sigh as he thanked Captain Reynolds for his kindness.

“Kindness?” cried the skipper. “Why, there isn’t an

ounce of kindness in it. I just expect to get as much as I give, and I feel sure you'll do all that good shooting can do to help to make us a bumper ship."

"That will they, I warrant," said Uncle Tom. "And now," he added, "let me introduce Olaf here a little more to you. How long, Captain Reynolds, have you been going back and fore to Greenland seas, may I ask?"

"Ever since I was a boy that you could have sewed up in a little saddle-back seal-skin, and now I'm six-and-twenty."

"Well, you may have heard of Olaf's father, Captain Ranna?"

"Captain Ranna! Poor Captain Ranna? Is this indeed his son? Boy, I knew your father well—a tall, fine, gentlemanly fellow. The Green Norseman we called him. Not that he was green, Captain Jones, but his ship. I was in the same pack when he was killed by a bear."

There were tears in Olaf's eyes. He was but a boy, yet even a man need not be ashamed if the memory of a dead father brings moisture to his eyes.

"And, let me think, though I was but young at the time. It was his spectioneer, I believe, who was with him at the time he was killed. Seabird was his name, and he boldly fought the murdering bear, and drove him off."

"Was it not Sigurd?" said Olaf.

"Ah, yes, that was it—Seagirt; but it's all the same. Then shake hands, boy. You're doubly welcome to my ship for your father's sake.

"Your father," he added, "was a clever man. His was called the 'lucky ship', and whenever she hove in sight Peterhead, Hull, and Fraserburgh ships all bore up after her to share in the seals she was sure to find. I've seen five or six in her wake—brigs, barques, and full-rigged ships. But your father used to play them a trick sometimes and shake them off. And what has become of Seabird—I mean Seagirt?"

"He hasn't been back to 'the country' since father's death."

"And do you think you could find him?"

"O, yes; he is in Inverness."

"Would he come? I'll make him second mate. For I haven't engaged that officer yet."

"Yes, sir, he'll come; and mother will be so pleased to have him near myself and Colin; for, you know, mother persists in looking upon us as boys."

Reynolds laughed.

"I don't think," he said, "that she is very far wrong, you know."

A right pleasant face and smile had Reynolds, though, when not laughing, there was an air of earnestness in his face that sometimes almost approached the sad. He was a young man, about the medium height, with square shoulders, small hands and feet, and firmly knit together all over. An athlete, indeed, in every sense of the word, as far as appearance went, and his future deeds, it will be seen, did not belie his looks.

His eyes were keen and searching. He seemed to look one through and through from underneath his somewhat lowered brows, but in by no means an unpleasant way; indeed, he appeared to be always trying to get the best side of a man's character uppermost, and would not have been happy had he not found something good in everybody. His face was more elongated than round, and as he wore only a slight moustache this elongation was all the more pronounced.

Now this visit to Fraserburgh and the *Bladder-nose* sealing ship had all been arranged by Rudland Syme. For as soon as the *Viking* had arrived in Inverness, and our heroes had spent a few weeks with Olaf's mother, the little yacht sailed again for Aberdeen.

Colin's first visit had been, of course, to the house of Miss Dewar, his aunt. He never announced his arrival until he ran up the granite steps and knocked. The smiling little servant declared herself delighted to see him. "O, the mistress will be pleased!" she cried.

Everything in the house and about it was just as he had left it, and when he popped into the drawing-room, there was Miss Dewar filling out the tea as she used to do. And

her guests were two ladies and honest Uncle Tom, or Captain Junk. Him Colin had not expected to meet.

I need not tell you how heartily welcome Colin had been made, or how the great Newfoundland dog found it absolutely necessary to engage in his old wild race upstairs and down, from basement to attic and back again.

One of Miss Dewar's very first inquiries had been for Olaf.

"Well and happy," said Colin, "and will be here soon."

The Norse lad thought it was his duty to visit Widow Jackson's house first. He had found the little lady well, he had found "my son John" at home also, and last, but not least, little Katie. All were so happy that they did not know how much to make of Olaf. Katie was a very pretty and engaging child, and she did not hesitate to sit on Olaf's knee and tell him candidly that she loved him very much, and that she and mammy had prayed for him every night.

Then there had come a knock at the widow's door.

"It is Sigurd," said Olaf.

He was duly admitted, and John gave him a chair.

Then Olaf took the carpet-bag he had brought, and opened it on the spot.

"Presents!" cried Katie. "O, ye're awfu' kind and bonnie!"

Yes, they were presents. There was a Shetland shawl and mits for Mrs. Jackson, a big pipe and lots of tobacco for John, and—well, all the other things were for Olaf's little sweetheart, as he called Katie, boxes of paints, picture-books, and toys of a dozen different descriptions, to say nothing of the drollest-looking dolls ever the girl had seen.

She clapped her hands for joy, she gave him a kiss, and she declared that she loved him more and more, and that he was bonnier than any boy she had ever seen at the kirk. What more could anyone wish a sweetheart to say than all that?

A right pleasant and even happy time of it had our young heroes spent in the Granite City; but then, you know, youth is the season made for joy, and so long as a boy does what-

ever duties fall to his lot, I do not see any reason why he should not be as happy as possible in a sinless way.

Miss Dewar had insisted on Olaf's being her guest as well as Colin, although he paid almost daily visits to the widow's.

When Olaf left Aberdeen at last to go to the Highlands with his friend, where they were to spend the autumn, Rudland Syme accompanied them.

The parting betwixt the Norse boy and little Katie was of so tearful—on her part—and heartrending a kind, that I forbear to sadden my pages by describing it.

Captain Reynolds was as good as his word. He was ready before any other ship belonging to the Greenland fleet had dreamt of leaving either Peterhead or Fraserburgh, and although it blew about half a gale of wind on the day he had arranged to sail, and although all the hills were white with snow, and snowy clouds were banked up to windward or drifting rapidly across the sky, although, too, the sea was sheeted in foam, the *Bladder-nose* was clear of the harbour before the end of the forenoon watch, and well out to sea.

The crowd on the pier cheered themselves almost hoarse, the men waving their caps aloft, the women—mothers, wives, and sweethearts—their handkerchiefs, and nearly all these were wet with tears.

When it was seen that the *Bladder-nose* had missed stays in tacking, and was being whirled on to a lee shore, the excitement was for a time intense. However, all was soon right again on board the bold and sturdy ship.

"That is an unlucky sign," said an old man.

But the women folks turned upon him, and there ensued a logomachy that ended in the old man having to seek refuge in flight.

A rough sea all the way to Lerwick. Not a ship lay in Bressa Sound, and, just as he had arranged it, Reynolds managed to secure the very pick of the Shetland Greenland-going seamen and towmen.

Reynolds was happy. So, as far as that goes, was every-

one on board the ship, for all looked forward to having a good voyage.

At Lerwick the men completed the purchase of their comforts in the shape of warmer underclothing, mits, and gloves.

Then all was completed, and the new men taken on board with their little boxes and their bags, for your hardy Shetlanders are like the Norsemen, and trouble themselves very little about luxuries. Indeed, they do not indulge in any very great superfluity of clothing—just enough to get along with.

The anchor was weighed, and the *Bladder-nose*, with all sail set, for a gentle breeze was blowing from the southward and east, wormed her way through between the islands, and was soon out and away on the dark heaving bosom of the North Sea. Before the short day ended and the sun began to descend towards the western waves, the land was visible only as a dark uncertain cloud-like line, far away on the south-eastern horizon.

Then night fell. Night fell dark and drear although it was barely four o'clock yet; but it must be remembered that the ship was pretty far to the nor'ard, and that it was early in the year, for Valentine's-day had only just passed when the good ship left the rock-bound shores of Scotland.

"Early dark, lads?" said Reynolds, when the boys came below to the cabin or saloon. "Yes, that is the worst of it, and for some time to come the days will get shorter and shorter, for we really are sailing into the regions of night."

"How interesting!" said Colin.

"Well, it may be interesting, but it is somewhat awkward. Just at present there doesn't happen to be a moon, you know, at least not one worth speaking about, and so we shall have to grope our way over the sea."

"A rid sea?"

"Yes, good luck to us; we've started well—a fair wind and a rid sea. All the other ships are a week behind us anyhow."

And Reynolds laughed right pleasantly.

When the steward lit the great swing-lamp, and placed the fiddles¹ on the table, and the cups and saucers, and bread-and-butter for tea, things down below began to assume a very cheerful aspect indeed.

There was a very large stove in the saloon, and the captain now heaped on more coals, till the brightness of the glow sent forth rivalled, and even tried to dim the light from the lamp itself.

"Tea and coffee are the drinks for the Arctic regions," said Reynolds, as he filled out Colin's fourth cup. "They are indeed the cups that cheer, but inebriate not."

By and by the mate came below, and the steward brought in another tea-pot. He, too, was cheerful and happy. The captain and his mate, a pleasant, fair-haired, merry Englishman, as red-faced and hardy as any son of a gun who ever sailed the seas, seemed to be on very friendly terms.

"Joseph Barry," he told the boys to-night, has sailed with me in the old *Bladder-nose* ever since I took command of her six years ago, and we are just like brothers—aren't we, Joe?"

"Yes," said Joe, stirring his tea with a horn-spoon, "just like brothers, only more so. I remember right well, sir, when you took charge first, you were the youngest skipper in the fleet, only a boy like. And I mind well, too, that lots of your friends in Fraserburgh didn't like your engaging an Englishman as a mate and not a Scotsman."

"Ah, Joe, I knew your sterling merit."

"What, ho!" The exclamation came from Joseph, for at that moment the *Bladder-nose* gave a lurch to leeward, and his cup of tea landed in his lap.

Everybody laughed. That is the best way to meet little mishaps like this, whether on sea or land.

"Steward!" cried the skipper; "now that we are fairly at sea; we'll dispense with cups and saucers, and have good, honest mugs."

The mate smoked a meerschaum; the captain, for company's sake, a mild cigar. But he was not really a smoker.

¹ Pieces of wood attached by strings that are shipped across the table under the cloth to prevent things from rolling off.

Having finished tea, he threw a bearskin down in front of the stove and two books.

"Squat there, boys," he said; "and if you don't want to talk, why, you can read."

Then, while the mate pulled his camp-stool near to the fire, Captain Reynolds took the ship's cat on his knee, as he threw himself into his big arm-chair.

"I hope," said Joe; "you younkers won't find the voyage out a very long or weary one."

"When we do get out," laughed the skipper, "I'll see to it they don't have much time to grow weary unless it be with hard work."

"But," said Olaf, "I would like, and I'm sure that Colin here would like too, to join a watch."

"Bravo!" cried Joe.

"Bravo!" said the skipper.

"Well," Joe said. "I propose that you, Olaf, join Seabird's watch—"

"Sigurd, please, mate."

"Then the mate won't please. I allow that Seagirt is a good name for a sailor; but we've begun to call him Seabird, and Seabird he'll have to remain unless you think Seagull would be an improvement. So you go with Seabird, and I'll have Colin."

It was thus arranged then. And now our heroes began to understand what roughing it in the wild North Sea, in winter, really means.

It is just possible that some of my readers who are bent on going to sea may think they would like to sail Greenland way. So I shall tell them the truth about it.

First and foremost then, when you do reach the ice and all your strange and exciting adventures among it and on it begin in earnest, I must admit it is exceedingly pleasant. There really is a kind of glamour or spell thrown over one up in these regions, which nobody can quite describe or understand.

I am not bound in these pages to attempt to lay down any theory of explanation, else I should say that this glamour is born first of the complete change such a visit has brought

about. Everything, I mean to say, is as new and strange as if you had been transported into another planet. Then, again, the air you breathe is so pure and bracing, that you become healthful in the very highest sense of the word. Why, you are breathing almost pure oxygen, and this it is, I believe, that to a great extent accounts for the feeling of perfect content and happiness one often feels, even when lying on the snow-clad ice, at the sunny side of a hummock.

But—ah! there is always a “but” to block one’s joy in this world, and always an “if” to stand between us and true happiness—we have to cross the stormy North Sea to get there. That is, your real Greenland sealer with real Greenland sailors on board of her has to. A fig for your men in dandy jackets that run out Iceland way in fine summer weather, in beautiful steam-yachts, fitted up with every convenience and every luxury. They are no more sailors than are those “yachtsmen”, whose only experience is sailing on a Norfolk broad.

On board the *Bladder-nose* there were three watches—first mate’s, second mate’s, and spectioneer’s or third mate’s. Now, in order to divide these watches at sea, so that they shall not be coming on at the same hours each day, the following plan is adopted, and this is the case in all good ships. The division is effected by means of what are called dog-watches. Let A = 1st mate, B = 2d, and C = 3d. Now A comes on in the first watch, from eight to twelve at night. The watches would then run as follows:—

A	keeps 1st watch from	8-12 p.m.
B	“ middle ”	12-4 a.m.
C	“ morning ”	4-8 a.m.
A	“ forenoon ”	8-12 noon.
B	“ afternoon ”	12-4 p.m.

Now, if C had his watch from 4-8, it is evident that A would have to come on again from 8-12, poor B would have to turn out at midnight as he did on the previous night, and poor C at 4 in the morning as before.

It is ordered otherwise for:—

C	keeps 1st dog-watch from	4-6 p.m.
A	“ 2d ”	“ ” 6-8 p.m.

Then you see B gets the first watch 8-12, and C the middle 12-4, so that A to-night has a whole night in, as it is called; that is, he can go to his bunk at 8 or 9 and sleep as soundly as he likes, till roused at 4 a.m. to keep the morning watch.

But keeping either the midnight or morning watch in an outward-bound Greenland ship, is no joke, I can assure you, and while walking about the dark cold deck, with the wind making daring attempts to freeze your very eyelids off, you do look forward longingly to your all night in. It was this turning out at night that our heroes found the hardest trial of all.

The watches were called in the good old fashion. There was no pretty little shrill-toned bo's'n's pipe. One of the hands simply went below, and after knocking three times on the deck with his heavily-booted foot, shouted in stentorian tones the name of the watch to be called, often adding words that were very far indeed from consolatory. For example:

"Mate's watch ahoy—oy—oy! Turn out, my lads. Turn out. Oilskins and sou'westers. Half a gale of wind and a snowstorm. Turn out, turn out. Stand by for your noses when you get on deck!"

Colin or Olaf, as the case might be, used to wriggle out of his bunk at once, and dress to face the awful ordeal. Had he thought twice about it, had he indulged himself in two extra seconds, he would have sunk once more into the blissful land of dreams, and this would have meant disgrace.

What Captain Reynolds had told them was true enough, and the farther north they got the shorter grew the days. Shorter and colder as well. The fair wind they had taken with them from the Shetland Isles lasted for nearly a week, then a spell of weather so wild commenced, that, sturdy and strong though the *Bladder-nose* was, the captain and mate often feared for her safety.

To make matters worse the wind had veered round to the north-north-east, and was thus almost dead ahead of them, and fatal to all progress. It did not blow a gale, but sufficiently near it to induce Reynolds to lie to.

Thus day after day went by, and it seemed indeed that the fierce wind would never come round to the proper quarter. The skipper and mate spent a considerable time each day studying the glass, that is, if all the times they looked at it could have been put together.

The bows and forecastle were now massed with ice, and probably the hardest work that the crew had to perform was striking the ice off with crowbars and other tools.

Then the spray that came whirling and singing on board from the tops of the foam-crested waves got almost instantly frozen on ropes and rigging and stays. So hard indeed did the ropes become, that it was found almost impossible at times to get them to run through the blocks.

But, independent of the frozen spray, snow fell heavily, so that the slippery decks were filled with it, or would soon have been, from bulwark to bulwark, had it not been constantly swept away.

There were several cases of frost-bite. Rudland Syme called them "beautiful cases", and took notes of them all to work up into an article for the *Lancet* as soon as he should return to *terra firma*.

Did Colin or Olaf repent having voluntarily joined a watch? Neither, I am glad to say. For, without doubt, the schooling that our Scottish hero had undergone during that long and dreary journey in the depth of winter to Finland had done him much good. It had really and truly hardened him. As for Olaf, he had not required hardening quite so much. He had been born among the snow, so to speak, and was as hardy as Highland heather.

The terrible weather experienced by our travellers was bad enough to bear with by day, but it was ten times worse at night.

I do not remember how low the spirit thermometer sank. It might have been but to zero, or many degrees below it. But twenty degrees below zero, with the sun shining and no wind blowing is paradise itself compared to zero, or a little above it, when a stiff nor'-easter is howling across the ocean.

There was one thing that every one gladly lent a hand to do down below in the saloon, and that was to feed the

stove. It was the first thing everybody looked at when he entered, then he would remark, "Why, that fire is very low," and proceed at once to put on more coals. Yet a bucket of water that stood close by the great stove—for even in Greenland cold water makes an excellent drink—was constantly frozen; bottled beer was frozen in the adjoining lockers too,—not into solid ice, but into small scales,—and if an officer left his coffee standing on the table for only a few minutes he had to sip it from under a thin cake of ice.

"Does one feel the cold much in a Greenland-going ship?" it may be asked. The answer is: Not if you keep moving about on deck and doing things." Only one must never take off one's mits and gloves in order to handle ropes or metal-work, or instant frost-bite may be the result. If you touch a piece of iron-work with your bare hand it feels as if it were red hot. It is agony for the time being, and your skin sticks to it.

The men, of course, suffer far more from the cold than the officers, because they are doing the manual work of the ship. I know of no greater test for a man's courage and endurance than to have to hang up aloft for some time across a yard-arm reefing a frozen topsail. Hands are quickly frozen there, and cheeks and noses also. Moreover, the whole body becomes so completely paralysed and numbed with the cold, that it has often been a wonder to me how the poor fellows could hold on at all. As it is, every year fatal accidents occur, by men being blown off the yard-arms, into the dark and seething sea, or dropping off and alighting upon the deck.

The only time of the day our heroes felt really cold was just after turning in. They slept in bunks little bigger than coffins. The openings into these bunks are mere bung-holes so to speak, and there is considerable art to be displayed in wriggling in and wriggling out again.

The bedclothes were sewn together, with sheets of brown paper placed between for extra warmth. Yet it was always half an hour before they could get to sleep, for the extreme cold. This was the most miserable time of the whole day.

But gentle warmth came at last, and with it sleep. Dreamless sleep, too, and refreshing.

When they awoke, or rather were rudely awakened by the man calling the watch, they would find the bunk, and the coverlet as well, lined with half an inch of pure white snow. Their frozen breath! There is not the slightest exaggeration in what I am now telling you. Were I to fall back upon my imagination, I could tell you strange stories indeed, concerning the effects of the frost and cold. But I am writing a plain unvarnished tale, and prefer to shoot under, rather than over the mark.

CHAPTER II.

OLAF'S FIRST BEAR—AN INK-BLACK OCEAN—SEALS IN THEIR MILLIONS.

CAPTAIN REYNOLDS was one of the most hopeful of men. Joseph, his mate, was another, and whenever they met together, whether it was during duty on deck or at their meals, they seemed to buoy each other up.

"This weather can't last much longer now, sir," Joseph would say.

"No, indeed, it is impossible."

"Let me see, sir. Why, we've been in this blow for nine days."

"Well, in twelve hours there'll be a change. You'll see."

"I do believe it is clearing a little to windward now, sir."

And so on and so forth. Then both would laugh, and look as pleased as if they'd had a fortune left them.

One morning, just after eight o'clock, Joseph came into the saloon beating his gloved hands and smiling all over, as one might say.

"What cheer, my friend?" said Reynolds, who had just sat down to breakfast.

"Cheer? Why, sir, the glass is going up, the wind is falling. We'll have a blow from the sou'-west before many hours, and won't we rip along then, sir?"

"Sit down, Joe, sit down. That is glorious news! Why, we'll be first in the 'country' after all. Ham and eggs, Joe, ham and eggs; I always think there is nothing like three fried eggs and half a pound of ham to commence breakfast with. More coffee, steward. Wind going down, eh? I tell you what, Joe, the other ships won't be in it this season. How are your patients, doctor?"

"O lovely, sir. Amputated a finger this morning. You should have seen that, Captain Reynolds, you should have, really. But I live in hopes of having a bigger and better operation to show you in a week or two. Pass the beef, Joseph."

It really seemed as if fortune was going to favour the good ship *Bladder-nose* at last. At all events the sun did shine, and the days were already beginning to get a little longer.

The first question that Reynolds asked of his mate next morning was:

"How is her head, Joseph?"

"About north and by east, sir."

"Ah! then the change has come, eh?"

"That it has, sir. The wind's fair at last, sir, and I've shaken out every reef and put her dead away before it. Not enough wind; that's the worst of it," he added. "It may come on to blow a bit more, or it may fall dead calm."

"O, anything rather than a calm, Joe."

But a calm came nevertheless before noon that day, although such a state of weather is rather unusual at that time of the year in these northern seas.

With the calm the temperature fell far lower than it had yet done. It was now many degrees below zero, and a cold mist—in reality it was steam—rose up from the surface of the ocean.

How bitterly, bitterly cold that steam was, however. It is called the "barber" by our Scottish sailors, and during

its prevalence frost-bite is of almost hourly occurrence on board ships of the Greenland fleet.

But the men knew how to guard against these accidents. You see, reader, as long as a man kept his woollen gloves on and his big mittens—gloves with a thumb but no fingers—the hands were safe. But John Frost is a sly old rascal; he will nip the nose or take a bite at the cheek, and the individual so bitten has no knowledge of what has taken place for the time being, because the spot is white and bloodless. So the seamen watch each other's faces, and when a bite occurs the place is at once rubbed with snow or ice until the circulation is restored. If this is not done very soon a huge blister is the result, and the part beneath becomes afterwards badly ulcerated.

Captain Reynolds took advantage of the calm to hoist the crow's-nest. This is a very large barrel, which is elevated to the main-truck, *i.e.* right to the top of the main-top-gallant mast itself; high above the last ratlins, so that to get into it a Jacob's ladder has to be erected. And it takes a good head to climb up this, as the steps are not fore and aft like those of the rigging, but athwart ships; you have therefore to turn a corner. Well, old salts think nothing of this, but getting round corners at such a giddy height, in order to get up into a barrel by a hole through the bottom thereof, is no fun for the landsman just turned sailor. I speak feelingly and from experience. Even in calm weather you must be a kind of steeple-jack to perform the feat, but if there is a breeze blowing and the topgallant mast and the nest is describing all kinds of circles and arcs of circles, you do feel indeed that your life is in terrible jeopardy, and only the fear of being laughed at urges you on.

At last you get inside and stand up. Here you will find one large telescope, if not two, and after a time you get so interested looking around you that you forget entirely where you are. But owing to the strange motion even the best of sailors are apt to get giddy and even sea-sick, when in the nest.

Olaf proved himself a perfect little sailor in the rigging, or aloft anywhere, from the very first, and he spent a con-

siderable portion of his time in the nest. (By the way, it is probably called a nest because it is usually lined with straw or shavings.) But Colin did not succeed in getting into the nest the first time he tried.

"Well," he said, when Joseph and Olaf rallied him, "I'm a big awkward chap, you know, and I'm more of a goose than a crow, and I really don't want to get my neck broken, you must remember. But," he added, "I'm going to have another try this afternoon. Whatever a man dares he can do."

He did have another try. There is nothing so successful as success, and when he got inside at last he felt constrained to relieve his feelings by waving his cap, and by way of encouraging him, Joseph and Olaf sent up a little cheer.

"What mites they appear," said Colin to himself; "no bigger than flies. I won't look down else I'll get giddy. Hullo, here is a telescope!"

So he began to scan the horizon. Some miles to the north he descried a long white line, and as the ship got nearer and nearer he found it was quite a sea of small icebergs.

Colin was glad to have something to report, so he shouted at the top of his voice :

"On deck, below there!"

"Ay, ay!" cried Joseph, looking up.

"Ice dead ahead of us!"

"Thank you."

But much to Colin's astonishment, Joseph took no more notice. Our Scotch hero thought the mate would at least alter the helm so as to clear the bergs. But he did nothing of the kind, and in half an hour they were fast approaching them.

No berg was bigger than a farmer's waggon. They were all covered with snow, and of all kinds of curious shapes. But such battering the *Bladder-nose* did receive, to be sure! Colin was more than once nearly pitched right out of the crow's-nest. The good ship was none the worse, however, and presently she was through the ice-stream, and right away into the open sea once more.

Now the surface of the ocean began to get rippled, and

soon a light but steady breeze was blowing. Colin grew giddy, and determined to hasten below at once.

Very easy to resolve, but the execution was the difficulty. He opened the little trap-door and permitted one of his legs to descend and feel around for the Jacob's ladder. His heart seemed to stand still with fear, for that leg could feel nothing under it.

It was indeed an awful and a trying moment, and Colin felt like giving himself up for lost. But he must be brave. He now boldly put down the other leg, and this time he was more successful. But all his life he remembered that perilous descent.

"You've just come down in time, youngster," said Joe. "Had you stayed up there much longer the nest would have been your bed-room for the night."

Colin felt thankful, for now it came on to blow in earnest.

The breeze lasted for nearly a week. Then one morning there was a long whitish line seen lying just over the horizon to the nor'ard and west. This is called the ice-glow or ice-blink.

"You see that sky?" cried the captain, laughing and rubbing his hands with glee.

"Ye—es!" said Colin, wondering what there was funny about it.

"That's the ice-glow, lad. You'll soon see the pack itself."

But the sun went down that night, red-gleaming over the waves, and no ice-pack hove in sight.

It happened to be Colin's all-night in. He came off duty at eight in the evening, and, after supper, went straight away to his bunk. He fell asleep thinking about the mysterious ocean of ice, that soon he hoped not only to see but to walk upon.

"From Greenland's icy mountains,
From India's coral strand;
Where Afric's sunny fountains
Roll down their golden sand."

Well, there is gold to be found sometimes in the rivers

of Africa; and the shores of many a green little island on which I have landed in the blue Indian Ocean are white with coral sand, but if Colin expected to see mountains of ice towering to the sky in this particular region—and he had expected so—he was very much mistaken indeed.

At daybreak next morning the *Bladder-nose* was off the main ice-pack. She had been passing through stream after stream of small bergs long before she reached it, and many a stream of soft slush or half-melted snow.

But where were the icy mountains? Nowhere to be seen. Instead of them this is precisely what Colin saw from the main-top, whither he had betaken himself to have a look round:

Above was a blue and cloudless sky, with here and there a few feathery clouds, each one, apparently, no bigger than a table-cover. Away to the east, as far as eye could see, nothing save the deep, dark, indigo-coloured ocean, ruffled by a gentle breeze from the west—thus blowing off the ice. There was not a sign of life of any kind to be seen in that direction. Now, westwards and north-west, when he turned his eyes, he perceived a vast plain of snow, no clear ice anywhere; and this mighty snow prairie was only raised here and there into tiny hills or hummocks, most of them rounded, others square, showing how pieces of bay ice had been heaped up one above the other like a pack of cards. The edge of this ice-pack was not more than three or four feet high, so that a seaman with legs of ordinary length could easily step on to it from a whaler-boat, or even from the dinghy; and this edge was clean cut. Between the ship and the edge of the ice-pack—she sailed about one hundred yards from it—was the deep, dark sea.

Colin was greatly struck by the intensity of its colour, which an artist might have painted of the blackest blue. This depth of colour was really an optical illusion, the peculiar shade being merely one of comparison with the extreme whiteness of the glittering snow, for the water of the Polar sea is as clear and sparkling as that of the Pacific or Indian Ocean.

To say that Colin was a little disappointed at the absence

of those icy mountains he had dreamed of, would be only half the truth, for he felt slightly disgusted. Joseph, the mate, came up the ratlins presently, and took his stand beside our hero in the top.

Noticing the look of disappointment in his face, Joseph burst into one of those merry laughs of his:

"Why, lad," he said, "has your bank broken, then, or is your great-grandmother dead and not left you anything? Come, Master Colin, whence these weeps?"

"O, there's nothing the matter, only I did expect to see ice. Why! do you call that the pack?"

"To be sure. What does it look like?"

"Look like! Why, like a morass, a peat-moss, or a bog after the first fall of snow in Scotland."

"See yonder," cried Joseph, pointing far ahead to a hummock near the edge of the pack. "Have you any gentlemen like those in your Scotch peat-mosses, eh?"

Colin was gazing in the direction indicated by Joseph, and soon could descry on the top of the hummock, which was one of the tallest, a yellow spot. This yellow spot, as the vessel drew nearer, resolved itself into the lines and lineaments of a huge Arctic bear.

"What is he standing there for?" said Colin.

"Why, he is counting the chances of getting something to eat from the ship. Times are hard with him, for the seals have not come yet, and he is lean and hungry and savage after his long winter's sleep and fast. He is hoping that we will take the ice, then he may have a ham-bone or the leg of the Lapp boy that looks after Olaf and Seabird, or your leg, Colin. O, I can tell you, Bruin isn't a bit dainty."

"A large bear on the ice out yonder, sir!" Joseph now shouted down towards the quarter-deck. "Shall you send a boat?"

"O yes," came Captain Reynolds' reply; "we'll have him for luck."

The day before this all six boats had been cleared and got out, and they now hung to their davits, three on each side, right over the water, and all ready to lower. There was the dinghy besides, that hung right astern.

"Tell us, mate, when to lower."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Captain Reynolds, sir," said Olaf. He was standing alone beside the skipper on the port or windward side of the ship.

"Yes, my lad."

"O, I'm not such a lad as I look, sir. I'm going to prove myself a man to-day, if you please."

"Yes; what's in your noddle?"

Instead of answering this question in a direct way, Olaf put another.

"How long do bears live?"

"O, for twenty years and more sometimes."

"Is it possible that that bear might be the one that killed my father?"

"What a strange notion, Olaf!"

"Yes, I know; but is it?"

"It is possible, but not probable. Why," he added, "from all accounts the bear that killed your poor father was a most audacious brute, and very likely he has been killed long ago."

"Not so, Captain Reynolds. The bear is either alive or has died a natural death."

"How know you?"

"Because he was wounded in a way that must have left peculiar scars. Sigurd has seen or heard descriptions of every bear's skin brought to Britain, Denmark, or Norway, since poor father's death."

"I'd lower away now," cried Joseph from the top.

"Captain Reynolds," continued Olaf, "you know now what I mean?"

"I can guess, seeing you have got your rifle ready."

"Yes, sir. I'd die happy if I could get that skin. It is," Olaf added, "a justifiable revenge."

There was no fear about Olaf. He sprang lightly, joyously, into the boat and took his place in the bows, that he might be the first to spring on shore upon the ice.

"O!" the bear must have said to himself when Olaf appeared over the edge of the ice, "is this all that there is to

eat? Well, one must be thankful for small mercies. Besides, though he is but tiny, he may be very tasty, so here goes for breakfast."

Bruin advanced. So did Olaf. Then Bruin stopped. There was something unusual about the movements of his enemy that he could not quite understand.

Olaf had knelt down.

While Bruin was still considering, there arose a puff of white smoke from Olaf's gun with a tongue of fire in the centre. Almost simultaneously Bruin felt giddy. He wavered, staggered, tried to advance, and fell forward, dying.

Olaf ran up now at the double, and Sigurd followed. The youth was bending down over Bruin, whose white-yellow coat was drenched in blood, when Sigurd pulled him quickly back.

Only just in time, for the bear had staggered to his feet, rose partially up, clawing the air, where Olaf would have been, then emitting a choking bellow, he tumbled on his side.

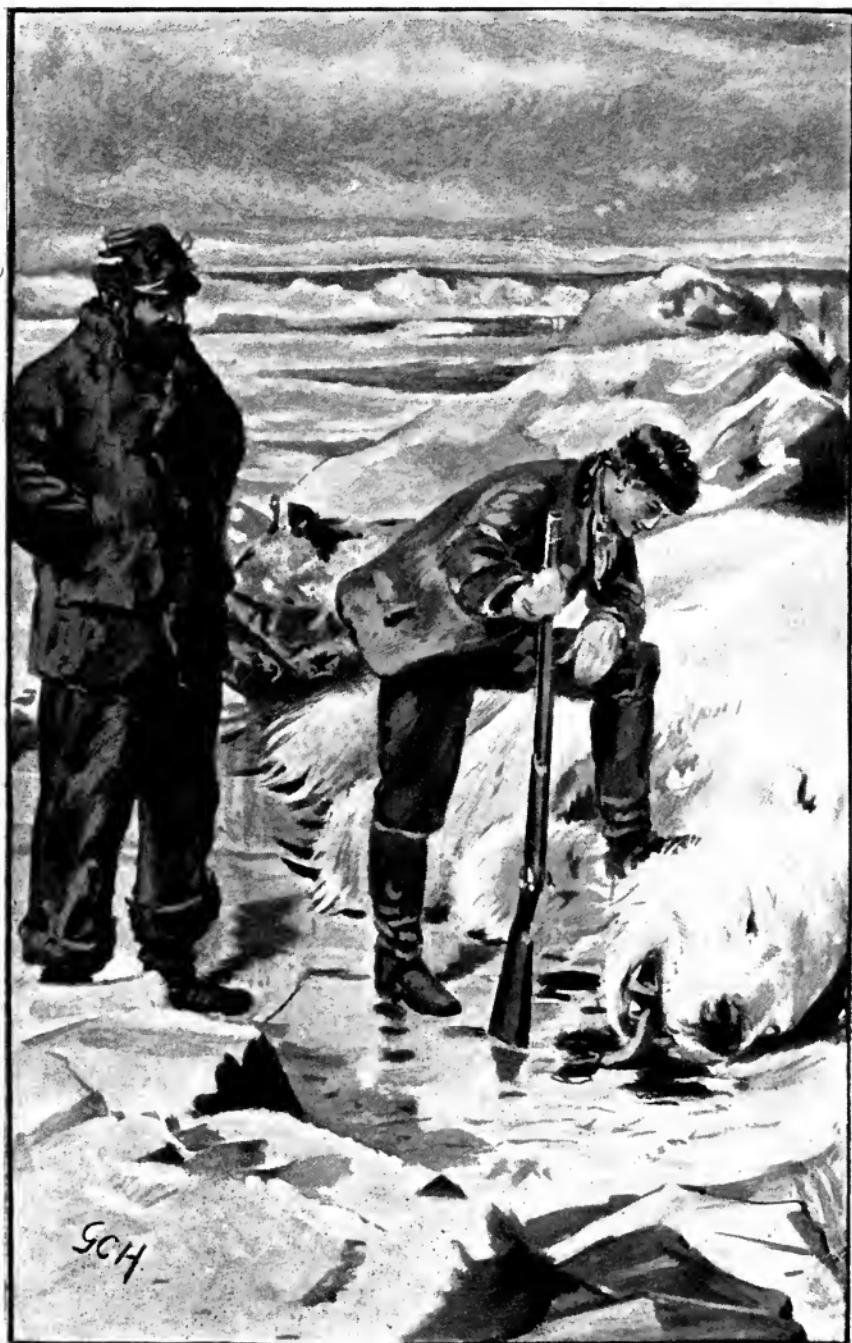
Dead enough now!

But examination proved he was not *the bear*.

Reader, if you have only seen the bears in the Zoological Gardens you can form no conception as to the extraordinary size and proportions these kings of the Polar ice attain. Their footprints on the ice are as large as the impression an ordinary kitchen-bellows would make; the pastern is thicker round than many a lady's waist, and, when skinned, the colossal carcase, as it lies upon the ice, is a sight that one can never forget.

Slowly along the pack edge the *Bladder-nose* now went sailing. Slowly, because the wind was light, and, moreover, because there was no reason now for hurry. The ship had made the "country", and to all appearance she was the first ship that had arrived. Time would soon tell, however, whether this were so or not.

The trend of the ice was northwards and east, and in this direction the vessel was steered. Every heart on board



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"EMITTING A CHOKING BELLOW THE BEAR TUMBLED
ON HIS SIDE."

beat high with hope now. Reynolds looked forward to his bumper ship, and the crew, to a man, expected to land in a few months' time at Lerwick and Fraserburgh, and meet their mothers, wives, or sweethearts with light hearts and heavy pockets.

Reynolds was delighted with both Colin and Olaf as good shots. They would help materially to fill the ship when, at the end of the season, they got amongst the old seals.

On and on sailed the ship for days and days, and the wind blew lightly and steadily from the west, with just a little northing in it.

"I wish we could see the seals though," said Captain Reynolds one day at breakfast.

"It won't be long," said Sigurd quietly.

"Not long, Seabird, and why?"

"Why, sir, I have seen to-day the *hoid maage*."

"What ship is that?" said the skipper, raising his brows in astonishment.

"He means," said Olaf laughing, "the ivory gull."

"O, the snow-bird, eh?"

"Well, Olaf, what does this portend?" said Colin.

Olaf looked at Sigurd, and Sigurd vouchsafed a few words in the Norse.

"Seals in millions soon to come. That is the translation of Sigurd's sentence."

They were in no great hurry, however.

Meanwhile it fell almost a dead calm, so the *Bladder-nose* was brought alongside the ice, and made fast to the pack by means of ice anchors.

This gave Colin and Olaf a chance to make acquaintance with the pack. They went over the side well armed, and Sigurd with the Lapp lad—who afterwards proved a most energetic and bold ice-man—went along with them. They all carried rifles with the exception of Svolto, the Lapp, who was armed with a formidable club, and also had coils of rope around his shoulders and waist.

These ropes are called by the Scotch sealers "lowrie tows", and are used for dragging skins, and at times they save life. Often, but for the lowrie tow, when a man slips

into the water, he might lose the number of his mess and fall a victim to sharks.

These monsters abound in the Greenland seas at sealing-time, and feed on the carcases of seals that may be thrown into the water. They also kill and devour wounded seals, though I think it is but seldom they attack the unwounded. Although this shark—the *Læmargus Borealis*, and the largest and fiercest in the world, often measuring from fifteen to eighteen feet in length—is very partial to seal's flesh, he will eat almost anything.

But as far as dragging any one from the water was concerned, the Lapp's "lowrie tow" was not needed to-day. For although the ice-floes were not frozen together, they were packed very close, and there was scarcely any motion visible among them.

Our heroes went on over the pack-ice for miles, and whenever they came to a hummock, Olaf and Colin got on the top, and bringing their lorgnettes into focus, had a good look all round. The bears were scarce, as yet, however, and none of the party had a chance of drawing a trigger. But they came back both hungry and happy, so their first day had not been altogether unprofitable.

Besides, Sigurd, who was nothing if not an enthusiastic ice-man, had taken the opportunity of explaining some little odds and ends concerning the formation of the various kinds of ice to be found in the pack.

Sigurd was not a very learned individual, but he had a good deal of common sense in that solid figure-head of his. Put into English, his little ice-lecture, which was delivered as they all sat together on top of a high hummock, would have run somewhat as follows:

"Concerning the formation of those huge pieces of flat ice which we see around us, many of them forty and fifty feet square, and lying deep in the water, I can tell you little. They are formed high up towards the Pole, and floated down here, covered with snow, just as you see them, Olaf. When this ice becomes detached from the pack, and floats in single bergs southwards, it is very dangerous to the shipping. I've been in many a ship, Colin, that has been

stove in by one of these pieces being dashed against her ribs, with the send of a wave or send of the wind and sea combined. Sometimes a ship has to pass through streams, as we call them, consisting of tens of thousands of them. Well, as you know, Olaf, our Greenland ships are all tremendously strong, or doubly fortified as it is called, and the bows are solid and shod with iron. Well, in passing through streams of large, loose ice, a good man at the helm will always put his ship straight for the largest berg. He rams that. This is considered preferable to being rammed. If the ship is struck amidships, or in the quarter, or even abaft the bows by a big berg, it is ten to one if she floats much longer, unless the terrible leak can be stopped by listing her over and covering it up with sail-cloth or even blankets.

"The little streams of ice we passed through as we came north are for the most part composed of corners knocked off the large pieces, or they are the large pieces that have drifted about until the action of the water has reduced them in size.

"Now look, Olaf. You see that large piece of very clear ice lying on top of the snow?"

"Yes, Sigurd."

"That is fresh water formed by the melting of snow, which is afterwards frozen. That piece of greenish transparent ice lying near it is salt-water ice."

"And yet," said Colin, "I have heard a learned professor say that there was no salt-water ice; that in freezing the salt was deposited."

"To some extent only, Colin. Your learned professor, who, perhaps, was not so learned after all, ought to come up here to the 'country' and taste a bit. I wonder how he would like a lump of that pale green boulder to cool his brandy-and-water.

"Now, Olaf, looking west yonder, don't you see a large expanse of low, flat, but perfectly level ice covered with snow?"

"Yes, Sigurd, and it looks for all the world like a Norwegian lake in mid-winter."

"That is the surface of the sea covered with comparatively thin ice. At first it was exceedingly thin; but, even after

one night's frost, it is so strong, you could skate, or perhaps *ski* over it. Hardly could you walk, however; but men often-times have to cross light, bending ice, and this they do by throwing themselves flat on it, thus distributing their weight, and, with arms extended, they then wriggle across.

"The bay ice, as it is called, becomes thicker and thicker while the frost lasts. Snow falls and covers it, then by and by a swell comes in from afar, and this thick, snow-covered bay ice is broken up into pieces. These pieces knock together, so that an edge of snow is raised all round, and it is then spoken of as pancake ice.

"But something else may happen. A storm comes on, we will suppose. The wind blows high from the east, and the great bergs are jammed tighter and tighter together every hour. Ill fares it then with the pancake ice, Olaf. It has to yield to force of circumstances. This force grinds much of it to pieces; it sinks, some beneath the pack, and some of it is raised up and thrown on top of the snow, just like the leaves of a great book."

"And in this way, I suppose," said Colin; "those square hummocks would be formed."

"And many of the rounded ones too, perhaps," said Sigurd. "This very hummock on which we now sit may have been formed in an ice-crush. Snow blown over it, would afterwards deprive it of its square form."

"But that bay ice, when of sufficient thickness," said Colin, "must be very safe to walk upon. No danger of falling through."

"O, there you make a mistake, Colin. For, during the season, in times of frost when the floes are glued together, the seals make use of the bay ice. They bore or melt with their breath and the heat of their noses holes in it, through which they can breathe. These holes are soon covered by thin ice and a little snow. They are called pussy-holes by the Scotch, and a person who is no practical ice-man does not perceive them, till presently he treads upon one, then he has one of the dullest experiences I know. His body sinks up to the arm-pits; for, of course, he has the sense to extend his arms—and his legs seem to tread upon nothing."

"I should think," said Colin laughing, "that this cold kind of joke is more relished by the onlookers than by the poor fellow who gets the plunge."

"True; but they speedily extricate him, else a passing shark might make a point of investigating matters too closely for the comfort of the individual most concerned, and drag him through altogether.

"If, after he has been assisted out, the frost is very hard, the sooner the man gets on board some ship the better."

"Well," said Olaf, "I mean to keep my weather-eye lifting, when I venture upon ice, for I should hate falling down a pussy-hole."

In such a calm sea there was little or no motion of the ship's masts, so that even Colin did not hesitate to go frequently up to the crow's-nest. There was room there for two, and some one was constantly on the watch.

One day Colin entered, while the mate himself was on duty. Perhaps Colin's sight was even better than that of the mate, for after looking through the telescope for a short time he cried:

"Why, Joseph, I see a whole crowd of little black dots on the dark surface of the sea!"

"Where? where?" exclaimed the mate, becoming much excited all at once.

"Just out yonder," Colin answered, pointing northward and east.

Up went Joseph's glass. He took just one glance, then he appeared to take leave of his senses all at once.

"Hurrah!" he shouted. He even waved his cap, and shouted the same word over and over again.

He did not seem to come to himself until hailed by the captain from the quarter-deck.

"Crow's-nest, ahoy! See anything, mate?"

Then Joseph looked over the rim of the nest.

"Yes, sir," he cried, "that I do. Seals are coming. The water some miles ahead yonder is black with their heads."

You ought to have been on board the *Bladder-nose* then, reader. It would have done your heart good to have heard

the rousing British cheer, that seemed to shake the ship from stem to stern.

Those below rushed madly on deck to join it, and even some of Rudland Syme's patients, with very little on their backs indeed, were seen among the cheering crowd of seamen.

The steward ran up to the captain.

"Is it true, sir?" he said.

"True, steward? That it is."

"Hurrah!" cried the steward; "then I suppose I may splice the main-brace?"

Now, the *Bladder-nose* was almost a teetotal ship. Nearly all the men were old hands, and they knew right well that for cold weather coffee is by far and away the best stimulant. So it was only during very hard work, or on Saturday nights, that grog was served out.

But, on this conspicuous occasion, what could Captain Reynolds do but comply with the steward's request. So, as he made up his mind to do so, he did it cheerfully.

"Yes, steward, yes; by all manner of means let the main-brace be spliced."

CHAPTER III.

"THE IVORY GULL HAS FLOWN AWAY"—"ALL IS FAIR IN LOVE AND SEALING."

WHEN sail was set, there was just wind enough to carry the good ship off the ice, but hardly sufficient to bear her along as swiftly as those seals were driving through the water. So the lovely and intelligent creatures passed them in their thousands and tens of thousands, swimming southwards and west and keeping pretty close to the pack edge.

Curiosity is one of the most conspicuous traits in the character of the Greenland seal, and now many of these beautiful creatures paused to gaze at the ship.

I wonder if any of them remembered the events of years

gone by, and of terrible massacres that had taken place on the blood-stained pack by "monsters" like those they now saw gazing over the bulwarks at them. Monsters with pale faces, who walked endways, and had strange weapons in their flippers, from which came thunder and lightning, and which dealt death among their ranks, or terrible and painful wounds.

Perhaps some seals did remember this. But there was no time now to spare. They could not wait to think or consider. They were bearing up for a somewhat warmer latitude, where the ice was not so high and rugged as it is up north, and so nature urged them on.

The *Bladder-nose* was now going back in her course. She must follow the seals. She was following fortune. So at least Captain Reynolds and his mate most firmly believed.

"How strange, isn't it, Joseph," he said that day while at dinner, "that everything seems to turn out precisely as I predicted? Seabird, your gull with the unpronounceable name has brought us good luck. What is it you call it? Because I have forgotten."

"The *hoid maage*," said Sigurd, with a quiet smile. "But," he added, "the bird is still with us."

"I have seen it, Seabird, I have seen it, and I have given orders that no one shall shoot or molest it."

"O no," said Sigurd, with a potato on his fork, "to kill it would bring us ill-luck, surely."

The ivory gull (*Larus Eburneus*) or snow-bird is of all gulls the most beautiful and graceful. It is as white as the driven snow, and every attitude of flight or motion is elegance personified, if I may so phrase it.

Our men, I am sorry to say, often kill this lovely creature most wantonly. Some, again, shoot it for the sake of having it stuffed; but the taxidermist does not live who could set this bird up so as to give any just idea of its extreme beauty and elegance. Besides, the slightest touch destroys, to some extent, the snowy whiteness of its plumage. But the Norwegians—many of them, at all events—look upon the bird as a creature that scarcely belongs to this world at all. To kill it, therefore, or to scare it away, would be

to court every species of ill-luck that can be imagined as befalling a ship.

In a day or two the officers and crew of the *Bladder-nose* had the extreme satisfaction of seeing the seals taking the ice by thousands—countless thousands, indeed.

The nights were now very short, it is true, but during the semi-darkness, just a little after the middle watch was called, those on deck could hear sounds coming from the pack that told them the puppy seals were coming fast.

This was so; and when Colin and Olaf went on deck next day after breakfast they could see, by means of their lorgnettes, that almost every piece of ice was the cold cradle for over a dozen young seals.

What lovely wee babes those young seals do look, to be sure! I know no young animal, not even a Newfoundland or collie puppy, that is half so beautiful, or that seems to appeal more to one for help and sympathy. They are of no great size at first—though they speedily grow—probably about eighteen inches long; but they are completely swaddled in their jackets of long whitish yellow fur, nothing of them being visible except their noses and beautiful eyes. And yet it is on the death of these innocent little creatures that so many ships every year, both from our own country and from Norway and Denmark, depend for a good voyage.

As soon as the young seals are old enough to kill they are killed, and that, too, in the most cruel and ruthless manner. I do not want to shock my readers, but I must say that the cruelties perpetrated on both the young seals and their mothers, during the season, are revolting in the extreme. I have known those helpless innocents flayed before the life was quite out of their bodies. And I have seen a man—human fiend rather—plant a rough hobnailed boot upon a young seal, that its plaintive cry might lure the mother up from the water to meet her doom and die beside it.

I think it was lucky for our heroes, upon the whole, that they were spared the terrible and ghastly scenes of a ship's crew engaged in the wholesale murder of these innocents.

How it came about that they missed seeing such a reign of terror, I must briefly tell you.

It had been the intention of Captain Reynolds to lie off the great pack, until the whole mighty army of seals had taken to the ice, until the pups were born, and until they were large enough to kill. The first day passed away, and the second—but lo! on the morning of the third, Sigurd came below to make a report to Captain Reynolds, who was just sitting down to breakfast.

“Hullo, Seabird!” said the Captain. “Why, what is the matter? you look as pale as a new half-crown! Have you seen a ghost?”

“Worse, sir, far; the ivory gull has flown away.”

“Well, I’m not superstitious, if you are, Seabird. Sit down, my good fellow, and have your breakfast. The bird, you know, may return.”

“Never, sir; and all our good luck has gone.”

Colin observed that Sigurd ate but very little breakfast, and that he paused to listen whenever he heard a footstep coming along the deck.

In about half-an-hour’s time there was a hail from the crow’s-nest:

“On deck there!”

There was no officer on deck, but Captain Reynolds quickly stood on the locker, opened the skylight, and shouted:

“Ay, ay, mate; what do you see?”

“A full-rigged ship, sir, coming from the south-south-west. I can just raise her topgallant sails.”

“It is as I thought,” said Sigurd.

And the captain himself now lost all appetite, and soon went on deck, leaving even his coffee untouched.

That forenoon, when the *Pelican*, a Peterhead ship, came towards the ice and backed her foreyard, Captain Reynolds called away a boat at once and went on board of her.

“Ah! how do you do?” said her skipper, a somewhat vulgar-looking man of about thirty. It was his very first year in charge of a ship, he having been but second mate before, though holding a master’s certificate. He now felt

exceedingly proud, and addressed his visitor as simply "Reynolds".

"Ah! how do you do, Reynolds? So you thought to give us all the slip, did you?"

"How d'ye do, Captain Smart? I certainly made an early move, but then the great ocean is free to all of us, at least I've always thought so."

"True, true; well, come down below and have a smoke and a glass of grog. So you've found the seals! Sly dog, Reynolds!"

"I've found the seals, and so have you, and if we hold on for a fortnight there is a bumper ship for the pair of us."

"Hold on for a fortnight! Eh? Come, I like that. Why by that time there would be half a dozen ships here. No, no, no; I'll start sealing this afternoon."

"Then you'll ruin all."

"Nonsense, Reynolds; a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

"But the seals are no size yet. Let us wait a week at least."

"Not I, and that is enough about it. You told me just now, Reynolds, that the ocean was free to us all, and now I'll tell you something—so is the sea of ice free to us all."

It was in vain arguing with a blockhead like this, so Captain Reynolds took his leave somewhat curtly; and, sure enough, the *Pelican's* boats left the ship's side that very day to murder the newly-born seals.

The result of this action was that the great multitude of seals shifted ground. They were scared out of their wits. They dived under the ice and were seen no more.

Mr. Smart of the *Pelican* came on board next morning. Captain Reynolds told his mate afterwards that he believed Mr. Smart had impudence enough for anything. Reynolds, however, was good-natured, so he received the man cordially enough.

"Well, Smart," he said, as he shook hands with him, "don't you think it would have been better had you taken my advice?"

"That I do confess. O, it is just me all over again; never could take good advice till it was too late. But what are you going to do about it, Reynolds?"

"Do about what?"

"Why, about the seals, of course. You have a precious long head on your shoulders. I suppose you will follow them up?"

"Well, I'll do my best."

"And I'll stick to you like death to a defunct nigger—see? You follow the seals, and I'll follow you. All is fair in love and sealing."

Smart laughed at his own wit till the glasses jingled upon the hanging table. Reynolds did not laugh, but he smiled as he made answer:

"Now, look here, Mr. Captain Smart—"

"That's me, Reynolds."

"Yes, that's you, especially the last word. But, listen—there is small chance of our falling in with the main army of seals this season again, though, I don't doubt, we'll find them in big patches."

"Yes, you'll find them, and I'll be there! Go on."

"Yes, I'll find them; but if I can manage it, Smart, you won't be there—that is telling you straight. I am just going to do all I can to shake you off, because—according to your own words—all's fair in love and sealing."

"I see what you mean," said Smart, beginning to look a little green and sour. "You think you might find enough seals to make a bumper ship for one but not for two. Have I got the proper hang of it?"

"I really think you have."

"Very well, I'll get on board and prepare."

"Prepare for what?"

"Prepare to follow the *Bladder-nose*," cried Smart as he disappeared over the side, laughing.

"I hope," said Joseph, "we will manage to give him the slip, sir."

"It will be somewhat difficult to do, Joseph, but we will try."

It was a race at first between these two ships. But it was

soon discovered on board the *Bladder-nose* that the *Pelican* was the best sailer. She permitted the other vessel to get fully two miles ahead, then just as Reynolds and Joseph were hoping they would soon see the last of Smart and his ship, all sail was clapped on her, and she came up towards the *Bladder-nose* hand over hand.

"It is no good, Joseph," said the captain despairingly; "she is the best sailer, and we can't run away from her anyhow."

"If we could get a couple of miles away at eleven o'clock, we might give her the slip in the dark."

This from Joseph.

But Smart was too wily. Clouds had banked up in the sky, there was every evidence that it was going to blow from the south-west, and that, therefore, towards midnight it would be dark. Accordingly, as the sun went down, the *Pelican* drew closer towards the *Bladder-nose*. And so the short night passed away.

Reynolds went cruising southwards, tack and half tack, against nearly half a gale of wind. The wind had loosened the ice considerably, and when it fell at last, seals were once more reported as visible from the mast-head, but they were lying far in upon the pack.

Now the number of seals was comparatively small, but Captain Reynolds made a great fuss about it. He took the ice with the *Bladder-nose* at once, and was gratified to notice that the *Pelican* did the same about three or four hundred yards farther to the south.

The captain was smiling to himself. So was Joseph.

"Joseph," said Reynolds, "is the glass rising?"

"That it is, sir."

Then the captain nodded and smiled to the mate, and the mate nodded and smiled back. The same thought was running through the mind of each.

"Everything is fair in love and sealing," said Smart to his mate. "We'll show the *Bladder-nose* how we can bore through the ice. We'll get among that patch of seals first, and I guess we'll clear some of them up before Mr. *Bladder-nose* gets in."

"Everything is fair in love and sealing," said Reynolds to his mate. "Mr. Smart wants to get in first, doesn't he? We'll let him."

"Ay, sir, we'll let him," said Joseph laughing.

Well, the *Pelican* bored in through the ice under a tremendous press of canvas.

But the *Bladder-nose* made hard work of it, or pretended to. Reynolds even sent his men overboard on to the bergs, and they made believe they were clearing a passage with their poles, while in reality they were blocking the vessel's way, and slowing her progress considerably.

"Why, just look," cried Smart to his mate; "the old slow coach is obliged to pole his ship in. We'll be half a day ahead of him, and more too. Hurrah!"

At ten o'clock that night the *Pelican* was close enough to the seals to send her men over the side, while the *Bladder-nose* was "pottering away", as Smart called it, nearly three miles astern.

The *Pelican*'s men went warily to work. They had expected to find young seals. But in reality it was only a patch of old males. These wily gentlemen keep to themselves at pupping-time. They form a club, as it were, and are very friendly indeed until, in about three weeks' time, the ladies join them. Then they quarrel!

I think it was about half-past eleven, or perhaps nearer midnight, before Mr. Smart discovered that he had been completely trapped. The stars were now shining very brightly, the little wind there was was veering round to the east. And the *Bladder-nose* was making the most of her way back towards the open sea.

Smart had to recall his men, but before they all got on board once more, the *Bladder-nose* was clear and the *Pelican* was frozen in hard and fast.

Now, Captain Reynolds was not by any means a revengeful man, yet before he sailed away that morning he could not resist the temptation to hoist a signal to his imprisoned friend Smart. It was Joseph's suggestion, and Joseph was permitted to do as he liked about it. So the signal, when Smart's mate succeeded in spelling it out, was as follows:

"All is fair in love and sealing. Good-bye."

"I am afraid," said Joseph, as he hauled down the last of the flags, "that signal has spoiled Mr. Smart's appetite for breakfast."

The *Bladder-nose* was now steered south in search of the seals, and it was not long before she fell in with some very lucrative patches. She lay near these until the young were large enough to kill, and then began the murder of the innocents, which I have already mentioned. But the great army of seals had been thoroughly scared and scattered, and did not come together again as a whole.

Captain Reynolds found his first batch of young seals somewhat south of the latitude of the island of Jan Mayen, the tall mountain summit of which was distinctly visible from the deck, glittering against the blue of the Arctic sky like a gigantic sugar-loaf. He found his second much farther south, and his third south of that. His success was becoming assured.

"We may not turn out the bumper ship," he said to Joseph, "that I had looked forward to, but nevertheless, if I get another thousand skins, I shall not be afraid to face my owners."

So he continued working south.

The season had now advanced so far that the sun did not set at all, it simply went round and round the sky, shining at midnight just as brightly as at noon, only with this difference, that at midnight it was much nearer to the horizon.

And now as Captain Reynolds goes on working farther and farther south with varied success, I shall take the opportunity of telling you something more than has yet come out in this story concerning his character.

It may seem a little surprising that a youth born and reared during the early part of his life on a farm, far away from the boom of the breakers or dash of angry waves against the rocks, far away from the sight of ships or even boats, should become enamoured of a life on the ocean wave. It was so in the case of young Osgood Reynolds at all events, account for it how we may.

His father was a farmer, and not a very wealthy one either, farming, indeed, only about a hundred acres on the banks of the beautiful Deveron, 'twixt the shires of Banff and Aberdeen.

Osgood was a quiet and dreamy sort of boy when very young; but none the less energetic when he had anything to do, or was set by his father or mother to some work that he liked. Whether he liked it or not, I may tell you that Osgood did it, and did it carefully too. Yes, Osgood was quiet, he did not speak a deal; but then, perhaps, boys of this kind are like the Irishman's parrot, they think all the more.

Was Osgood imaginative? Ah! there we have it, and it is my opinion, nay, I think I have proved it ere now in fact, that an imaginative boy often turns out a very real man. What are merely fancies or longings in boyhood change as the lad gets older. There was nothing, perhaps, to indicate that Reynolds—who was far from being a very cheerful comrade at school, and much preferred solitude when free, to the companionship of the roystering country boys he had to herd with indoors—would ever turn out to be anything out of the common. I have used the word “solitude”, but was it solitude which the lad was enjoying, while wandering all by himself on the banks and braes of the beautiful river, across many a lonesome heathy moor, and in the dark depths of the pine-woods? Very much the reverse, I think. He had companions that his thoughtless comrades little knew about. The birds in the wood sang to him and told him stories of far-off lands, that they had visited on their fleet wings. The coneys and hares, that seemed not a whit afraid of him, and hopped close by him as he lay on a bank of moss, told him tales also. They had not travelled so far as the birds, they had not visited sunny lands beyond the seas where flowers bloom for ever beneath the bright cerulean sky; but they had been away across the blue mountains yonder, and had seen many strange things and encountered many strange adventures, and they told all to Osgood Reynolds.

And even the moles and moudieworts had stories to tell

him of the wondrous life they led deep down in the earth; of the caves therein that formed their homes, of the long tunnels that ran here, there, and everywhere, of their mossy beds where sleep was sound and safe, because they were watched over by good little fairies such as Osgood had read of in books. It was true, they admitted, that sunshine never penetrated into their caves and galleried homes; but, they told Osgood, they had a light that was far more pleasant—phosphorescent lamps, that glowed and gleamed in all directions, so that it was never really dark.

But Osgood permitted his imagination to roam a little farther than the woods and hills. He had not wings like the swallows and martins, and could not fly away to far-off foreign lands, much though he should have loved to do so. But there was the river. That was a source of never-ending delight to the boy. He was the largest ship-owner in all broad Scotland. Never a day passed that he did not send freighted ships away to sea, and never a day passed that one did not return. And the sailors had such wondrous stories to tell. All imagination, it is true. Well, girls have dolls, and playing at being mothers and little housekeepers does them good. Why should not boys have ships?

I can tell the reader this: though Osgood was only playing at being a ship-owner, though his craft were but the tiniest wee tubs he had whittled with his knife from morsels of wood, and with rigged match-work masts and muslin sails, the occupation did him good, and was fitting and preparing him to face the stern realities of life.

One day the clergyman of his parish found Osgood at the river-side. He was close behind him when the boy saw him first, and from the smile on his face Osgood guessed he had been there for some time, so he blushed as red as a ragged robin—the flower, I mean, not the bird. You see, Osgood had been talking aloud. He was just starting off a full-rigged ship to San Domingo, and he had to give his captain all his orders, and tell him what to bring back, and all the rest of it.

Osgood imagined that the Rev. S. Stronach would think

him a fool. But he was a kindly old man and a boy at heart, and he not only entered into Osgood's play of starting off that ship to San Domingo, but he gave the captain of the fairy craft much good advice, and told of many things he might bring home that Osgood had never thought or known of.

"Have you been long at sea, sir?" said Osgood.

"No, my little man."

Osgood opened his blue eyes a little wider.

"You wonder, I suppose," said the minister, "how I appear to know so much about the sea and about foreign countries. Well, I have gained all my knowledge from books. You haven't many books, I suppose? I will lend you books to read," he continued, patting the boy's bare, curly head, for Osgood had sighed and glanced longingly across the river at the woods. But I'm sure he did not see them. He was thinking and silent.

O, reader, you should have been there just then to see the bright, glad sparkle that came to Osgood's eyes, the happy smile that went curving round his mouth and lit up his whole face.

"Will you? You will? Sir, sir, you are so good!"

"Come and see me to-morrow afternoon at the manse. Good-day."

Osgood cleared his full-rigged ship out of dock with all haste, waved his hand to the captain as she went sailing down the river, then ran home to tell his mother of his adventure.

"A' honour to the gweed¹ kin' man," she said, "and a fine sermon he preaches on Sawbath; but 'deed, laddie, if ye'd learn to milk the kye and herd the nowt it wad be far better than stuffin' yer heid wi' nonsense aboot foreign lands."

"But, midder,² I'm goin' to be a sailor."

"Never wi' my will, laddie. Never, I houp, while I'm abeen the grun'."³

Mr. Stronach welcomed Osgood right heartily. The boy had rigged himself out in his Sunday's best for the occasion. After tea the parson said:

"Now, my boy, to speak in the dialect of the district, I

¹ Good.

² Mother.

³ Above the earth.

think there is mair in you than the speen¹ put in. You've got mental as well as physical qualities, so you can come here and read whenever you like, and I'll give you any book you choose to take home with you. Now come with me; I'm going to turn you loose in my library."

A new life from that very moment had opened out before Osgood. But, strangely enough, the books of travel he grew most fond of were not those that described sunny lands in southern seas, but those that told of life in the great white lands and oceans of ice around the pole. When Osgood was about thirteen years of age he probably knew more about the Arctic regions than many of the professors of the Aberdeen University.

Moreover, he wanted to go to sea, and to visit these regions. But his parents would not hear of him going to sea to visit any regions whatever, whether north or south.

Of course the boy was grief-stricken at this determination on their part, but his fertile imagination came to his relief—to some extent. He seemed now to love the winter season more even than spring or summer. When skating was to be had he almost lived upon skates. He roamed through the snow-laden woods, and had terrible adventures with great ice-bears. When the river was frozen along its edges he engaged in seal-fishing, and even captured whales. His full-rigged ship went no more to San Domingo. She was cleared for the Polar Ocean, and on her return her captain was invited to dinner in a great snow-cave beneath the spruce-trees, and invited to tell his story, which, of course, teemed with wild adventure and hair-breadth escapes.

"I think," said Mr. Stronach, the minister, to Osgood's parents one day, "you'll have to let the boy go to sea. He'll never settle on shore."

But his parents were old-fashioned and obdurate. Instead of ploughing the sea he should plough the lea, his father said, and instead of planting the British standard on the North Pole or any other pole he should plant kail in the cabbage garden. And that, he added, was his *ipse dixit*, with all due deference to the minister's opinions.

¹ Spoon.

That very night Osgood determined to cut the Gordian knot. He would run away to sea.

Times had altered since boys could do that sort of thing; but, of course, Osgood was not to know that. Like a good many other little boys that I have known, he thought he had only to appear on the sandy sea-beach just as the last boat was pulling off to the ship lying in the beautiful bay, her sails all loose and ready; that the captain would receive him with open arms; that for a time he would be but a cabin-boy, then raised to walk the quarter-deck as a middy, finishing off perhaps with commanding a fine craft of his own, and marrying an admiral's daughter.

CHAPTER IV.

STILL AMONG THE ICE—A STRANGE, WILD SCHEME.

OSGOOD did run away to sea. Or if he didn't run, he at anyrate walked.

He made up a little bundle of all he thought he should need, rose very early on a dark and wintry February morning, and started off. He had a little money which he had saved up from sixpences and pennies given him for running errands, more than would pay his fare to Aberdeen.

He arrived there cold and hungry the same afternoon. He knew that a ship was about to sail for the Arctic regions, commanded by Captain Penny himself, an officer who had won some renown in the search for Sir John Franklin. So he got on board the vessel, which was a steamer, and presented himself before the captain.

This gentleman, seeing the lad was not a common gutter-snipe or street Arab, took him below.

"Of course you've run away, my lad?" he said.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, let me disabuse your mind of some of its romantic

notions. Even then, if I were willing to take you, the law would not allow me, without the consent of your parents."

"But they will never consent, sir."

"Then you cannot go to sea until you are twenty-one, and by that time you will have altered your mind. Good-bye, dear boy; I believe you have pluck in you."

Osgood went away, but not heart-broken. The ship would sail next morning early. Osgood managed to slip on board in the dark and bustle, and hid himself forward in a sail-bunker in front of the galley.

He fell asleep, and when he awoke he felt very ill. He knew by the silence and motion that the ship was at sea. How long he lay there, half-dead, he never knew. It might have been for days. But sailor men came one morning to look for a storm-jib, and pulled him out with the canvas.

"Hullo, matie! here's a blessed stowaway! Well, lad, I expect you've chosen the wrong craft."

"No, I haven't. I want to go to Greenland."

"Well, you'll get there. Captain Penny is not going to call at Lerwick this cruise. He is going to have nothing but Scotch sailors, and it isn't likely he'll put in anywhere to land the likes o' you."

"You're not a Scotch sailor; I know by your tongue."

"Well, lad, don't be cheeky. Come and have some breakfast."

Scotch or English, this man was very kind to him. Finally he took him to the mate, and the mate took him before Captain Penny.

The captain simply laughed.

"Set him to work," he said. "Don't be hard on him either."

"O, no," said the mate.

Then he was taken forward.

"When we get haud o' a stowaway," said the mate, "the plan is to begin by treatin' him to twa dozen wi' a good rope's-en'. Ye see," he added, "the weather is geyan¹ cauld, and that'll warm ye."

Osgood said nothing. He simply pulled off his jacket.

¹ Rather.

"Keep on your claes,¹ man," the mate said, laughing. "I wadna thrash a little chap like you to be made skipper o' the ship."

"But, sir," said Osgood, "if it is the right way to begin, never mind my size. I'm used to bein' thrashed every day at school."

"Weel, we shall omit the formality for ance. Gang below and help the cook."

When Osgood returned from the Arctic regions Captain Penny sent the boy home, and with him a letter to his parents, and it was probably this letter that convinced them that their boy was born for a sailor, and that sailor he would be.

Osgood was very happy now. Being fond of the briny myself, I think it is a fine thing for a boy to get to sea under almost any circumstances; but when he goes afloat with the full consent of his parents or guardians, it is a finer thing still.

Osgood sailed with Penny for three years. Then he passed for second mate.

He was a hard student, and after serving for some time longer in other ships and obtaining his master-mariner's certificate, he got a command.

He was lucky, some said. True enough, but then he was smart; and I do think myself that most of us when young have luck on our side if we would only be earnest and try to deserve it. Now there is a saying that I have heard often enough and also read in books, to the effect that the boy is father of the man. It was so in Osgood's case, at all events.

"Joseph," said Osgood Reynolds one day at dinner after a spell of silence not unusual with him, "I am sick of sealing.

"Now," he added, "I don't mind so much going after the old ones, but this slaughter of babies appears to me to be very tragical and murderous. And, mind you, Joe, in all my dreams of life in the Arctic regions, when I was a little chap in the frozen woods or along the ice-bound river, or

¹ Clothes.

setting out in search of the North-west Passage round the Hill of Bourtrie, I never thought of this grim and murderous work. And even yet I'd like to turn explorer."

"I should think, sir," replied Joseph, "that any exploring ship would be glad of your services. And if you do go, sir, try to think of poor Joe here. I'd go as steward, or even loblolly-boy to your doctor."

"O," cried Rudland Syme, "the glamour of the great white land has been all over me for years, and I'll never be able to shake it off. If you do go exploring, take me."

"And me," said Olaf.

"And me," said Colin.

"And me," nodded Sigurd.

The Lapp lad was standing behind the captain's chair with a dish of potatoes in his hand. He now waited at table regularly.

"And me too," he said.

Svolto had not very much English—hardly enough, indeed, to bless himself with—but he managed to say that.

Captain Reynolds laughed.

"I'd gladly go exploring," he said, "and I'd be pleased to take you all, boys; but as I shall likely go in a subordinate position myself, I don't quite see how it can be managed. But," he added, "I'm going to think it out."

The *Bladder-nose*, by dint of hard work and skill, had managed to secure several thousand skins. Moreover, Olaf had killed five bears—but he did not find *the bear*,—so that Reynolds might now have borne up for home, and his owners would have given him a hearty welcome. But one day seals were sighted far in through the western ice, and the pieces being loose the ship was rove in through towards them. As the wind blew from the south-east, the feat was easily accomplished.

The sun shone very brightly. The sun shone almost too brightly, thought Sigurd, who was an older Arctic hand than even the captain. A cold-looking sun it was, almost rayless at midnight, just a disc of polished silver, and one could even count the very spots on it with the naked eye.

The seals lay well, so that two and sometimes even three

were killed on each snow-clad floe. The hunting or seal-stalking was so exciting that neither captain, gunners, or crew thought about anything else. The sportsmen just went on and on after their quarry for four-and-twenty hours, without, of course, a wink of sleep, and very little food; and the men kept dragging the skins towards the ship, so that there was a broad, brown blood-track all the way 'twixt the vessel and the distant sealers, who were spread out like skirmishers in a battle-field. Like skirmishers, too, they took advantage of every bit of cover afforded them by hummocks or blocks of loose ice.

I suppose it is because there is something of the savage in all our natures, that shooting big game is so exciting and pleasant to us all. Olaf, for example, was the happiest of the happy, because he succeeded in killing another bear. He followed one more, far away from the sealers. In about twenty minutes' time, however, he was seen hastening back, vaulting from piece to piece of ice, and followed by the infuriated Bruin.

His gun had burst. Knowing that something very unusual must be the matter, Colin hastened to meet him. Only just in time, for the bear had overtaken Olaf, and was crouching for a spring. In haste Colin fired. Shoot in haste and repent at leisure! Colin wounded the bear, that was all; and the monster made good his escape.

The seals were all gone at last, dead or below, and the last skin had been dragged to the ship's side. Yes, but the sun had been all too bright. And now the *Bladder-nose* was locked up in the arms of King Frost.

Captain Reynolds laughed, that was all. He was a man that worry would never kill, because he never went half-way to meet it, and took it easy when it did come.

"Joseph," he said, "what do you think of this?"

Joseph laughed too.

"I'll tell you, sir, what I do think. I think that it serves us right for imprisoning the poor *Pelican*."

"Just my thoughts to a 't', Joe; but we must make the best of it."

For three long, dreary weeks the *Bladder-nose* lay frozen up in that ice-pack.

So long as the sealing continued, and for a whole week after, there were birds on the pack by thousands. Bears also came to visit the field of slaughter, and also a few blue foxes—the Arctic species that turns quite white in winter. But when the “crangs”, as Scotch sailors call the carcasses, were picked bare, birds and beasts all deserted the pack, and the ship was left amidst a silence so impressive as to be positively painful.

They were, at first, not more than five miles from the dark blue open water, but stream after stream of heavy ice had come with the current from the east and been glued to the main pack, so that in ten days' time no water could be seen even from the mast-head.

Under such circumstances as these a vessel might remain in an ice pack for a year or more, until, all provisions being exhausted, the crew should one by one droop and die.

But one thing there was that prevented the possibility of such a calamity, namely, the gradual floating or shifting of the whole pack or “country” towards the south and the west.

Anxiously enough, day after day, did Joseph and Captain Reynolds take sights at the sun at noon, with the view of determining their whereabouts. They found that the ice did not drift the same distance every day, nor was the direction always quite the same.

Well, there was danger certainly, for at times the vessel got what is called in the “nips”. This happened when a heavy swell rolled in from the east. The sight was then magnificent in the extreme, albeit it was terrible. No water was anywhere visible, and yet the pack was all one mass of heaving, rolling waves of ice, while the noise emitted by the grinding together of the green sides of the bergs was indescribable.

Loud reports were constant—here, there, and everywhere; but the principal noises could only be compared to the sound made by wild beasts, especially if we could imagine those wild beasts to be in mortal agony.

During the "nips" the ship would be raised as to her bows, or it might be her stern, many feet out of the water, and if she had not been a craft of unusual strength and good formation she would have collapsed like a crushed egg-shell, and gone down when the pressure was at length removed.

These were times of great anxiety to all on board, and the danger of foundering was at times so great, that all preparations were made for a bivouac upon the ice, stores and clothing landed, and even the sails to form tents and skins for sleeping-bags. Times like these, indeed, are enough to turn the hair of the Arctic voyager white in a single night.

But nothing save happiness and jollity reigned either aft, forward, or between decks when there was no motion in the ice. The men played games, too, on the ice during the long day; for I may mention that the vessel had now drifted so far south, and the season was so well advanced, that there was a brief night between eleven o'clock and one.

Concerts were got up on board, and every man contributed his quota to the general entertainment if he had anything to sing or anything to say.

The evening hours just after supper were certainly the cosiest in the cabin or saloon. The captain always sat in his big arm-chair with the ship's cat on his knee. Colin and Olaf lay in front of the fire on a bearskin rug, while the doctor and the two mates were not far away.

"Well," said Reynolds one day, "I don't think, boys, it would be impossible to find the pole, even to get right across it, and come out alive at the other side."

"Your ambition is great, sir," said Joseph.

"Captain Reynolds," said Rudland Syme, "I know of one way in which you could surmount all difficulties and get easily across the Pole."

"I don't expect much sense out of your noddle, doctor, but tell us what you mean."

"Cross it," said Rudland, "in imagination, Captain; and you don't need to get out of your chair to do it, or put the ship's cat to the slightest inconvenience."

"Joseph," said Captain Reynolds, "we are not a long way from the eastern shores of Greenland. Now I have a scheme for crossing on snow-shoes right over to the western shores on the great inland glaciers."

"What!" cried Olaf delightedly. "Are you a *skilöber?*?"

"A she-lover?" said Reynolds laughing. "Rather! Why, I'm going to be married when I get home."

"O, I don't mean that; *skis* are long, narrow snow-shoes, and you can do ten miles an hour with them."

"Tell us all about them," said Reynolds; "I referred to the ordinary Indian snow-shoe."

"Well, Colin talks better English than I; he can tell you all about our going to the north of Norway on *skier*, and all our strange and wonderful adventures."

"O!" cried the captain, "this must be a story in many chapters. Go on, Colin; we'll have the first chapter from you."

"No," said Colin, "we will talk time about just as it occurs to us, for no doubt we can remind each other thus of many incidents that, singly, one or other of us would forget."

And it was in this way that they related to Captain Reynolds and to Joseph, chapter after chapter of the story of their wild winter adventures in Norseland. They did not finish in one night; indeed it took them three. It was too good a story, Reynolds said, to hurry over, and Joseph quite agreed with him.

For some time after the boys had finished their story the captain sat smoking his cigar, stroking the ship's cat, and thinking. Then he said to Olaf:

"Does it take one long to acquire the art of she—what do you call it?"

"*Skilöbing.*"

"Sheelobing. Does it?"

"No, not to be moderately expert. Colin here learned in a very short time."

"Joseph," he said, "you and I must be taught."

"Colin and I have two pairs each with us," said Olaf. "Well, there is a nice bit of bay ice about a mile to the

eastward here. Suppose we give you lesson No. 1 tomorrow, gentlemen?"

And so it was agreed.

Joseph and Captain Reynolds both got on the *skier*, and though each of them had the usual mishaps, still they made very fair progress, especially the captain; so much so, indeed, that Olaf gave it as his opinion that with a few months' practice both would be reasonably expert.

One day something like a cloud appeared upon the western horizon. But this something, which was at first but a mere mist, gray and indistinct, resolved itself into substantiality. For when the sun went down behind it in the north-west it was much darker, and never a ray of light traversed it. The something turned out to be land!

A day or two after this a lane of water opened up rather suddenly betwixt the *skilöbning* party and the ship. This lane grew, and grew, and grew till it was almost a lake.

A boat was quickly lowered, and as speedily as possible dragged over the rugged ice towards the water. None too soon. For a heavy, dark mist rolled up from the south, and before they again reached the ice with the rescued party and began making their way towards the *Bladder-nose*, the whole "country" was enveloped in a fog so dense that it was difficult indeed to make much progress.

Luckily both Joseph and Captain Reynolds carried pocket-compasses, else it might have fared but badly with all hands, for a swell had come in from the south after the fog, and the great bergs began to grind together with such a noise and shrieking, that the fog-horns blown on board of the ship could not be heard.

These dense fogs that envelope the ice-fields about the beginning of June constitute a very real source of danger to men engaged in stalking old seals. However, in this case, all got safely on board.

Next day the fog lifted, and the ice was now beginning to open. The lane or lake of water trended north and south, or rather north-east and south-west.

The saws were now got out, and after four-and-twenty

hours of the very hardest of work the men succeeded in cutting a canal from the ship to the water. This was a piece of engineering for which the captain and crew of the *Bladder-nose* might well have given themselves credit, but they thought little of it.

"Yes, steward; splice the main-brace!" said the captain.

And the main-brace was spliced twice during the performance of the work; but it is satisfactory to say that many of the men preferred coffee to rum.

Once free of the ice, sail was set, and the *Bladder-nose* was slowly worked southward and west, though, the wind being ahead, not very much progress was made.

But the rugged shores of Greenland grew still more distinct, and still more distinct in his mind grew the determination of brave Captain Reynolds to cross from east to west the country that now lay before him, if, as he told Joseph, he could but get men in Britain to fit him out.

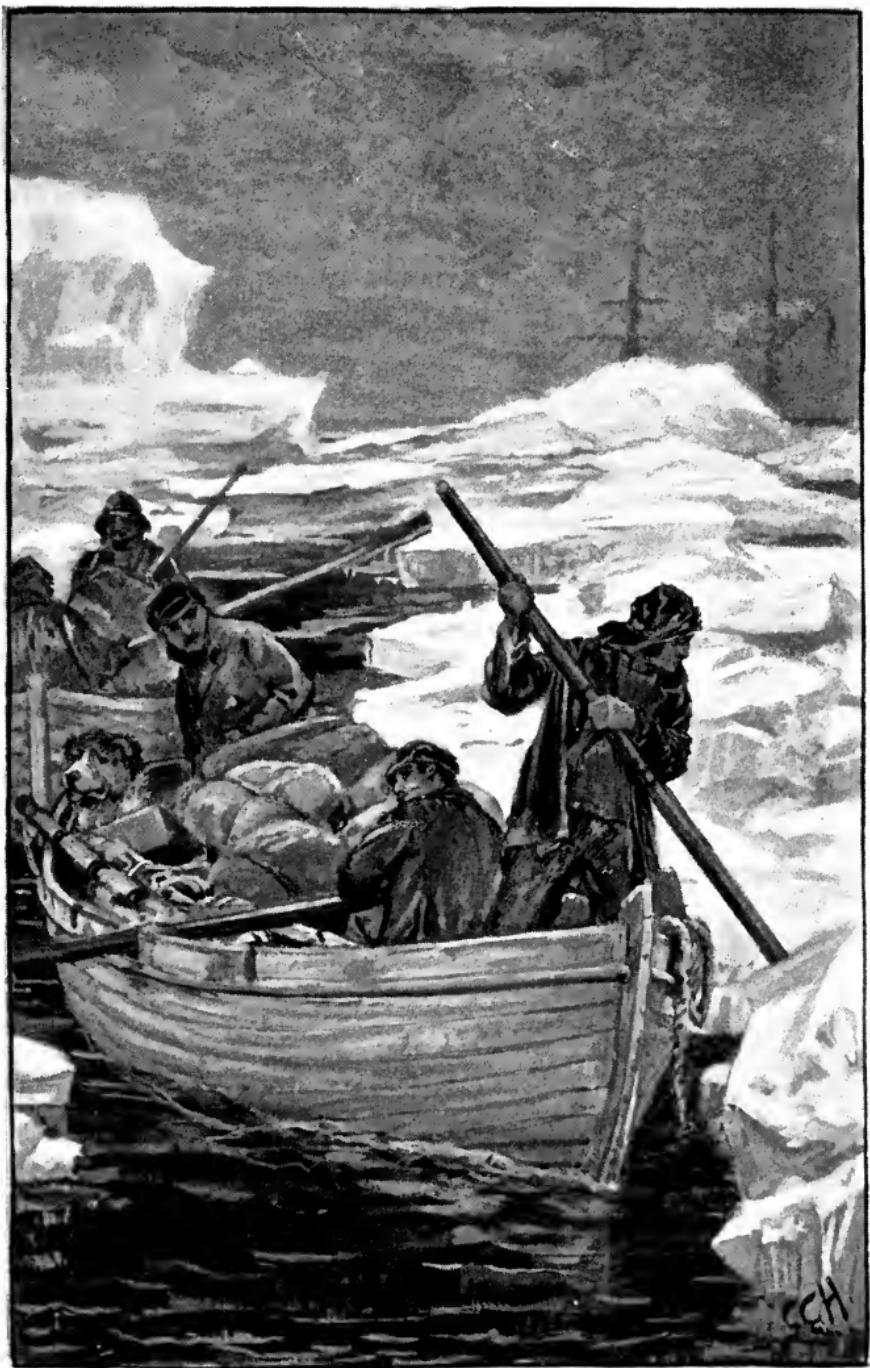
They at last succeeded in forcing their way through a barrier of heavy ice that lay between them and the open ocean. But for most of the way they had to sail without their rudder, which had been unshipped to save its being dashed to pieces by the bergs around them.

It was a delightful sensation for all on board to find themselves out, once more, on the free, broad bosom of the ocean, after the dangers they had come through. In order to have a look at the land—they were now in north latitude about 66° —Captain Reynolds sailed still farther to the westward.

Strangely enough they found seals even here, resting on the outlying points of ice. But Olaf found no more bears, so his revenge remained ungratified, much to his sorrow. The reader must not imagine that I myself consider this longing to revenge his father's death by slaying every bear he came across was dignified, but at the same time it was natural enough.

And now, as Reynolds looked on that savage, ice-bound coast of Greenland, he began almost to fear that his scheme for scaling the mountain-sides, reaching the inland glaciers, and striking across to the west coast was almost chimerical.

He sighed as he looked towards the hills. Colin was



standing near him on the quarter-deck, and heard the sigh.

"I can tell what you are thinking about," said Colin. "You are thinking that your scheme is impossible."

"Something like that, I admit. Only, you know, Colin, one never knows what one can do till one tries."

"My uncle's motto is a good one, I believe, sir."

"And that is?"

"Whatever a man dares he can do."

"A thousand thanks! I've heard the line before, I think, in some old song."

"Yes."

"Well, Colin M'Ivor, we will dare. Shake hands, lad. And," he added, "we—will—do."

CHAPTER V.

OUR WOULD-BE EXPLORER IS SAID TO BE MAD—FINDS A FRIEND AT LAST.

THE *Bladder-nose* bore up for home, and in due time arrived safe and sound at Fraserburgh. She had not lost a single man, either through accident or from sickness, a fact for which Rudland Syme took no small credit to himself, although it might have been questioned whether it depended on his skill in medicine and surgery.

Now, after the usual rejoicings had taken place, that always follow the arrival of any ship of the fleet at either Peterhead or Fraserburgh, Captain Reynolds was one evening asked, while at dinner, whether or not he had heard anything of Captain Smart and his ship *Pelican*, "because," said his interrogator, "she has been reported lost with all hands."

Thus, indeed, did the captain of the *Bladder-nose* receive a shock. For he alone was accountable for the catastrophe, if catastrophe it should turn out to be. He told the story,

however, of Smart's having scared away the seals, and of his conduct in general, down even to the time he had left him frozen in. The general verdict upon Mr. Smart that night was "serve him right".

Nevertheless, Reynolds' mind was greatly relieved when a few days afterwards the *Pelican* herself was seen out at sea, making signals for a pilot. And a single glance at her was enough to show the onlookers that she was a "clean ship"; that is, that she had few, if any, seals on board. When the whole story got noised about, there was a good deal of laughing at Smart's expense, and as soon as this bold skipper got his ship paid off, he deemed it best to go south for a summer holiday.

The *Bladder-nose* had made a good voyage, and the owners were genuinely glad to see her captain. He had worked well, they told him; and as for the bumper-ship, why, they were willing to wait for that till next season.

Of course, this was equivalent to wishing Reynolds to continue in command of the *Bladder-nose*. He did not say that he would not, just then, for he had not as yet made up his mind concerning the crossing of Greenland.

But an event was soon to take place, and did soon take place, that for a time drove ambition itself out of Reynolds' mind. For just a month after his return to Scotland he led to the altar the daughter of a wealthy laird, who resided not a hundred miles from Peterhead. To this young lady, who was allowed to be very beautiful, even by the old maids of the parish in which she lived, Reynolds was a real hero, and no doubt she loved him much.

Our two young heroes, with Joseph, Sigurd, and even Svolto, were at the wedding, and at the dinner that followed Reynolds took the opportunity of broaching the subject of his pet ambition.

It was the first time his bride had heard of it, and she trembled to think how soon she might lose her husband, and that, possibly, for ever; for even to her mind the scheme seemed all too adventurous, and fraught with dangers untold and unknown.

It was the first his father-in-law had heard of it. He was a

steady-going Scottish laird of the old school, and as Reynolds spoke of his plans for crossing Greenland, the old man put on his big horn-rimmed glasses and narrowly surveyed him with the look of one who would say: "Are you mad, sir?"

And this was a question that, after the happy couple had left to spend their honeymoon by the shores of the blue Levant, was freely discussed among those left behind at the Laird's house.

"Heaven forbid it should turn out to be so!" said one Job's comforter to the father-in-law; "but indeed, sir, it appears to me and to several of my neighbours here that your daughter's husband is a wee bittock off his head."

"Ah, weel," said a canny farmer, "mairrage may work wonders for the lad. Suspend your judgment, ma freens, till he comes hame again."

The first speaker turned to Colin and Olaf.

"Did you boys notice anything peculiar in your skipper's behaviour while at sea?"

Now Olaf felt somewhat nettled at being called a boy so bluntly, so he made reply:

"To begin with, sir, let me tell you that I am not a boy. Let me add that my captain is wiser far than my present questioner, and that his scheme for crossing Greenland is eminently practicable."

"Hoity-toity! don't lose your temper, young gentleman; I meant no offence."

"I consider that what my friend Olaf says," added Colin, "is quite correct; and if Captain Reynolds receives the pecuniary and scientific support he merits, the crossing of Greenland by the high inland glaciers will be a *fait accompli* before two years are over."

No more was said, but soon after, in a well-known magazine, there appeared a long paper from Reynolds' pen.

Condensed and epitomized it ran somewhat as follows:—"I have long considered that results beneficial to science might accrue from a well-organized and successful expedition across Greenland from shore to shore. I do not attempt to minimize the dangers and difficulties of my plan, although I consider it the most feasible of any that

has yet been proposed; nor do I forget that all expeditions into the interior of this country have hitherto failed, and been to a great extent barren of results.

"My own method of crossing the *terra incognita* shall be briefly as follows: I intend, please God, to leave Scotland or Norway, about the middle of May on board of a sealer, and to sail for the eastern shores of Greenland, landing my little expedition thereon at a point as far north as I can possibly reach.

"There is a probability, however, that owing to the state of the ice the vessel may not be able to reach the coast, but she must be worked in towards the land as far as is consonant with her safety. I and my men will then disembark upon the ice and get on shore as best we can.

"There is, however, another contingency to be provided for, namely this, we may find open water between the ice-pack and the shore. This renders it necessary that we should have a boat. I have my plans for providing a light craft that I and my friends can easily drag across the ice.

"Although I hope to land to the northward of Cape Dan, an unexplored region, much must be left to chance, or, I should rather say, to that good Providence that has never yet deserted me.

"Having landed, we shall make observations and take notes of the habits of life of the heathen Eskimo, a colony of whom we expect to find on the coast. We shall then climb the bare rocks as high as possible, and thus get clear of the greatest dangers of the glaciers.

"Having reached the highest point, we will endeavour to make straight for Christiansaab, far north in the Bay of Disko. This may be considered a high latitude thus to choose, but we expect to find the snow far easier for sledges and snow-shoes in the north than it can possibly be farther south.

"We shall have the Norwegian snow-shoes—or '*skier*'—as well as the Canadian, and our sledges will be of a kind which my experience of Arctic regions tells me, will be best fitted to drag across the snow."

There was much more of Reynolds' paper, with which I have no occasion to bother the reader; but having now learned a little of what this brave and daring young man's plans were, we will presently see how far he was able to follow them.

It was only natural to suppose that this article from the pen of so well-known a Greenland voyager, would create some excitement in the scientific world. Reynolds was already known by his writings in various magazines connected with natural history, for he had written a considerable number of papers on Arctic birds and beasts, as well as on the flora of Davis Straits and the land lying farther north along the shores of western Greenland.

His scheme, however, was ruthlessly criticized and cut to pieces. No one said in so many words that the man was mad, but they did not hesitate to imply that he was a headstrong fool. For the inland ice of Greenland was at this time looked upon even by many eminent men with a kind of superstitious dread.

"Let us, for the sake of hypothesis," wrote one learned man in a certain magazine, "imagine that this foolhardy Reynolds has succeeded in reaching the shores of eastern Greenland, how will he ever be able to reach the real flat expanse of inland ice? That is, how will he manage to pass the outside edge thereof, where rise through the great ice-mantle, peaks above peaks, these peaks, in all probability, presenting at every point an impenetrable barrier."

"He proposes," this paper went on, "to scale the high mountains of the east coast, and from their summits to step upon the expanse of ice which is dammed up against them, a proposal that betrays his absolute ignorance of the true conditions of the country."

But this article was really a moderate criticism compared with some, and many of them had evidently been written by men who had probably never been a single mile at sea, even in a fishing-boat.

When Reynolds and his bonnie bride returned from the Mediterranean, they determined to reside for some time in

London, and see the sights—give themselves up to pleasure and gaiety, in fact.

It was now September, and Reynolds' article had been read, and criticized, and cut to pieces months ago. Nevertheless, the brave young fellow was visited at his hotel by many members of learned societies, most of whom, however, tried hard to reason him out of his scheme, which some declared was absurd in the extreme, and all condemned as altogether too risky.

Their good advice, as they were vain enough to call it, was wasted on Reynolds. He listened politely, attentively even, but made not the slightest comment. Then he quietly turned the conversation to the weather, the last bill in parliament, or the very latest mysterious tragedy. No wonder these *savants* considered this bold master-mariner a very unsatisfactory, not to say refractory, subject to deal with.

After they were gone, Reynolds would laugh heartily over the interview, but his young wife looked very sad.

"Don't you think," she sometimes said, "that these good people are right, and that your intended expedition will be a very dangerous one?"

"I am not going to hide from you, dear wife mine, that it contains an element of danger, and though this very fact might commend it to a hot-headed boy, I am too old for such a sentiment. The danger I shall face; and shall do so, I trust, in a quiet, cool-headed, serious way which will enable me to overcome it. Cheer up, darling. I'm going away next summer, it is true, but it is also true that I shall come back safe and sound."

Her only answer was a sigh.

"A card for you, sir," said the bustling little landlady, presenting the salver.

"Lord Daybreak!" said Reynolds. "Show the gentleman in, madam. Another *savant*, I suppose," he added, turning to his wife; "but it is a cheerful kind of a name—Lord Daybreak."

And a cheerful-looking gentleman was now admitted. Though older than Reynolds, he looked as hard as steel. He was a *savant*, certainly, but one of a different stamp

from most of the others. He had travelled much in Iceland and Norway, had visited North Cape, and had cruised a good deal among the ice in his own yacht.

After he had talked long enough to completely ingratiate himself with not only Reynolds but his wife, he turned to the former and said:

“I am now going to come straight to the point, if you promise not to be angry?”

“You have made me so happy, Lord Daybreak, that I couldn’t be angry whatever you said.”

“Have you cash enough for your expedition?”

“No, that is the drawback; but I hope—”

“Fiddlesticks! Hope is good enough in its way, but it won’t sail a ship to Greenland east. Will you oblige me by permitting me to pay the x’s?”

“I hardly know what to say.”

“Then don’t say it. I won’t take a refusal.

“Furthermore, if you will allow me, I shall take you to the coast.”

“You! In a yacht?”

“She is a yacht; but such a yacht! I’ve done a deal of ice-work with her, and she is fortified quite as strongly as any sealer or whaler that ever sailed the northern sea. Now, I’m off; you will see a deal of me ’twixt now and May, so let us keep in touch.”

The winter that followed was a hard and a snowy one in the Highlands of Scotland. But everything was lightsome and cheerful enough at the house of Colin’s uncle. Grant M’Ivor was a man that loved adventure. In his veins ran the best Celtic blood in the kingdom, and though now too old to travel much himself, he dearly loved to read about exploration, and the deeds and wanderings of daring men in far-off lands. So he would have been the last to have said a word against Colin’s journey, the madcap expedition, as it had come to be called by ignorant people, who discussed it over the walnuts and the wine.

The Laird also loved good company, and this winter he had issued a kind of general invitation to all those who

were to join Reynolds in his attempt to cross Greenland. They were told that they could go and come as they pleased, but that the oftener they came and the longer they stayed, the happier he and Mrs. M'Ivor would be.

Every room in the house was aired and warmed by fires that kept King Frost at bay, so the great old place looked exceedingly comfortable, especially when the red light from the dining-room or drawing-room shone across the snow-clad lawns of an evening.

Not only Captain Junk—that is, our Uncle Tom, you know—but Miss Dewar herself were among the invited guests, and not only Miss Dewar, but Cæsar, the splendid Newfoundland; and he, with a spirited, little, daft-looking Scotch terrier friend of his—Keltie, to wit—were constantly together.

Reynolds and his wife were told that, to a very large extent, they must consider themselves prisoners here all the winter long, until the buds came on the trees and the birds began to sing.

In the autumn, while Reynolds was still in the south, Colin and Olaf, after staying some weeks by Loch Ness with Mrs. Ranna, got out the *Viking*, and with their captain, Sigurd, and all their crew, Svolto the Lapp, they took a cruise to Norway. They entered many of the fjords and visited many old friends, and staying for some days at the home of their former acquaintance Kristiansen, the hunter and naturalist. They brought back with them quite a cargo of *skier*.

When the snow fell at last, and it came on this winter very early in November, hardly a day passed that Reynolds and Joseph did not don their *skier* and take lessons in *skilöbning* from Olaf or Sigurd, so that in time they both became very expert indeed.

Snow lay all round Aberdeen this season as well as up in the Highlands, so that Rudland Syme, who was prosecuting his studies at the university here, had plenty of opportunities for *ski-ing*, and before the end of the winter was probably as good at the sport as Colin himself.

Lord Daybreak's yacht was brought round to Aberdeen,

and there fitted out. After leaving Reynolds and his little party on the east coast of Greenland, or as near to it as the vessel could venture, he meant to go for a long cruise on on his own account around Spitzbergen way. So he said.

As the spring wore on, Reynolds and Daybreak were very busy indeed, and might have been seen all day long passing to or from the quay, not far from which the beautiful and sturdy yacht *Aurora* was lying. But hardly anyone was admitted on board, so the crowds of wondering curiosity-hunters had to be content to gaze upon the vessel from the shore.

CHAPTER VI.

BATTLING WITH THE FLOES AND THE CURRENT.

THE scene is changed, and now we find Daybreak's good yacht *Aurora* tossing about at sea, 'twixt Iceland and the mainland of Greenland.

It is summer-time here. Not that this season is a very gay one in these high latitudes. It has its characteristics, nevertheless, and these are in marked contrast to the terrible dreariness of its winter, and even its spring months, when all is locked in the very arms of stern King Frost; when bears are asleep in their caves, or, awakening at times, stalk gaunt and grim and hungry across the inland ice, looking for the seals they seldom see; when never a bird is to be heard or seen in the uncertain light of moon, stars, or aurora. A dreary time indeed!

But now, behold! The wind has been very wild, yet though the seas are still houses high, the men of the yacht are busy shaking out the reefs. She is a steamer, it is true, but no coals are burned while breezes last.

It is early morning. The steward's bell has not yet rung for breakfast. Lord Daybreak comes slowly up the stairs that lead from the saloon.

"Well, boys," he says, addressing Olaf and Colin, "how goes it?"

"The breeze is now fair, sir, and Captain Reynolds says we can take the ice to-day."

"Ah! he is very anxious to get on shore, I know, but we must be as cautious as we can be."

Cæsar, the Newfoundland dog, at this moment made a great jump at his lordship. It was a kind of *double entendre*, for, while he licked Lord Daybreak's ear, he seized his fur-cap, and was soon galloping round and round the deck with it, Keltie hard after him, and trying to bite his heels. The owner of the fur-cap only laughed, and presently Olaf recovered his property, and gave the dog a lecture. Cæsar looked first at Olaf, and then at the cap, now once more on his lordship's head.

"It's all very well," he seemed to say; "but you can't understand what a temptation that fur-cap is to me. I'll have it again before the day is out. You see."

Then he and Keltie went wildly romping round the decks once more.

Rudland Syme and Reynolds had been forward, and now came aft, laughing and talking merrily together.

"Ha! Lord Daybreak," cried Reynolds, pointing to the ice-pack.

"Now's the day and now's the hour,
See the front of battle lower."

"Aren't you too eager?" said Daybreak laughing.

"Not a bit of it. I want to count the very few hours now until I stand high on yonder distant mountain-top, with my merry men all around me."

"You are just like a school-boy, Reynolds, looking forward to the Christmas holidays."

"And that is precisely how I feel. Only it is summer that is coming, not Christmas. Syme and I have been forward looking at a unicorn.¹ I tell you what it is, sir, he

¹ The male narwhal is so called by men of our Greenland fleet, from the monstrosity ivory tusk that he bears, and which protrudes from the upper jaw. It is often from 8 to 10 feet long, and the animal—a species of whale about 20 feet long—is said to spear fishes with it.—G. S.

seemed to wave his ivory tusk aloft, and welcome us back to the sea of ice. And we shall take the ice to-day."

"I suppose we must."

Ring—ding—ding—ding! It was the steward's bell, and I think Reynolds ate a more hearty breakfast to-day than usual.

After prayers—for morning worship was always conducted on deck, if the weather permitted—Captain Reynolds ordered an inspection of his whole expedition and outfit.

In the latter Lord Daybreak was considerably interested. He knew what men were going with the bold explorer, but as to the provisions made for their comfort and safety, he as yet knew but little.

Reynolds appeared, then, on deck about ten o'clock, dressed for the snow.

"At a first glance," said Lord Daybreak, "I shouldn't think you had enough on, Reynolds. But everything is warm."

"Everything inside and out is warm and fairly light, and every man of us has three changes of underclothing—all woollen, of course."

"Lay aft here," he shouted, "all you men of the expedition." At the word of command there took their places on the quarter-deck, all dressed for the snow—Colin, Olaf, Joseph, Rudland Syme, Sigurd, and Svolto.

"Are these all?"

"No," said Colin, and he whistled. Cæsar came bounding aft with little Keltie at his heels, and both stood quietly in line with the others.

"I hope," said Lord Daybreak laughing, "you won't have to kill and eat that noble dog."

"O no, sir," Colin made answer. "My aunt says I must bring Cæsar back with me. Besides," he added with a smile, "Svolto, the Lapp lad, would last us for a whole fortnight at a pinch."

Each man had a hooded oilskin coat, the hood lined with red flannel, and with strings, so that it could be tied across the face above the snow spectacles. The latter were meant to prevent them from turning snow-blind. Both hands and feet were also well protected.

Then there was a trustworthy tent, which was now partially erected amidships, and appeared, though small, to be exceedingly serviceable.

The inner man was also well provided for. But one thing was noticeable, not only as regarded the outfit or general "rig-out", but the provisions as well, and it was this: while everything was serviceable and good, not an ounce of superfluous weight was to be carried. Tinned meats, therefore, portable soups, and beef-teas, essence of coffee and cocoa, &c., &c., with plenty of biscuits and butter. Medicinal comforts in the shape of brandy and a little wine were taken, and medicines also, but these were all under the charge of Syme himself.

The firearms were good but light, and I may say the same for the scientific instruments. Then there was the light boat, and the sledges, also light. Indeed, when loaded up, one man would manage, under ordinary circumstances, to drag one of them over the snow.

"Why," said Daybreak, as he looked about him at the display, "you have quite a museum here!"

But what not only his lordship, but all the crew of the *Aurora* seemed to take the greatest interest in, were the sleeping-bags.

These were made of the hides of foxes, procured specially from Scotland and Norway. The hairy side, of course, was turned in. Each bag was meant to be the sleeping-sack for three, or was large enough to hold three, and the hoods could, in very severe weather, be tied over the men's faces, so as entirely to protect them against cold and the weather generally.

No, there was no danger of their smothering; for so strong is the air when the temperature is low, that a hole or opening no larger than a pencil-case could fill, is sufficient to admit air enough to support life.

Now Reynolds' people, as he called the members of his expedition, had all been drilled to the use of these bed-bags, so that at the order "all hands turn in", everybody curled up with a celerity that was not only marvellous, but so amusing that everybody roared with laughter.

Reynolds himself took to his bag with the rest, and so, strange to say, did the great Newfoundland and little Keltie, and after they were all bedded up, this remarkable expedition might be said to consist merely of three very untidy-looking bundles, which somehow reminded one of bodies sewn up in sacks ready to be dropped overboard by way of burial.

But I must tell you how they were distributed.

Bag I. contained Reynolds, Joe, and Rudland Syme.

Bag II. contained Colin, Olaf, and Cæsar.

Bag III. contained Sigurd, Svolto, and little Keltie.

It is nearly the end of June, and the *Aurora* is far up north, as far indeed as it is safe to go, for she is nearly at 66° N. latitude. The weather has been unsettled of late, and far from pleasant, while the ice consists not only of the usual large snow-clad flat pieces, but of huge mountain-icebergs that tower up here and there all over the pack. Had they been more numerous they would have struck terror to the hearts of many of his crew, who had never sailed in these regions till now. Among the larger pieces of ice was a mass of broken-up pancake and bay ice, and a deal of slush, showing that, during recent gales, the motion in the pack must indeed have been terrible. At any hour, too, it might come on to blow again from seaward; a heavy swell might roll in, and then, indeed, the chances of safety for the *Aurora* yacht, strong though she was, would be small indeed.

It was the knowledge of such a possibility that now created the anxiety in Reynolds' mind to be landed—not on the shores of Greenland—this would be impossible owing to the ice and the tremendous rate at which the mill-stream currents raged and ran—but on the pack.

Since her arrival in the sea of ice, the *Aurora* had been more than once in the "nips", and though he said nothing about it, Reynolds, and for the matter of that, Sigurd also, felt convinced that the *Aurora* was not quite so strong as her noble owner believed her to be.

The weather continued unfavourable for a time, although

the wind was low. Fogs alternated with heavy falls of sleet and rain, while it was not unusual for the temperature to sink so low in a few hours that Lord Daybreak feared his vessel might be imprisoned. But this was an occurrence that at this time of the year was but little to be dreaded.

Many seals were seen on the ice, and both Olaf and Colin had opportunities of proving themselves to be excellent sportsmen. Olaf killed one bear. No, even this was not *the* bear. Many bladder-nose seals were also bagged. These fierce and terrible brutes are so named because, when irritated, they raise a hood or bag, which is inflated, and seems to be a protection for the skull. They will seldom run from a man, but will attack him most ferociously if enraged.

One or two thorough duckings were the result of Olaf's and Colin's present sporting ventures. For the snow on the ice-tops was now somewhat soft, and overlapped the water at the edges. However, as it happened, there were no sharks in waiting to convey them farther down into the water's dark depths, so they were speedily rescued, somewhat sadder, somewhat wiser, and considerably wetter.

The weather had cleared at last. And time for it to clear, thinks Reynolds, for it was now the 10th of July. Afar off yonder, beyond the now quiet and still ice-pack, can be seen the land—the glorious land!

But the ice did not reach quite all the way to the wild and rocky shore. No, there was the open sea between, and miles of it. Indeed, at one part it went stretching away far inland between bold, dark cliffs that pronounced it to be a fjord similar to those in Norway.

There might have been a possibility of working the yacht away in through as far as the water, but this would incur not only delay, but considerable risk to the vessel. Lord Daybreak had really been more than good and kind, and Reynolds wanted him to get away out to sea as soon as possible.

While he was making these calculations, the explorer was aloft in the crow's-nest. He now came below. Daybreak was on the quarter-deck.

"The time has come, my lord."

"And you really have made up your mind to start soon?"

"Yes, this very day. Our letters are written, our traps are all on deck. We shall leave the kindly shelter of your yacht, Lord Daybreak, after dinner—and with many regrets. You have been so, so good."

"Tush, tush, tush! you have done me a high honour, and I am really sorry to part with you. You really think you can reach Disko Bay?"

"Lord Daybreak, we are going to try as hard as we know how, that is all I can say."

"Bravo! You are, indeed, a plucky fellow!"

"Now it is my turn to say tush, tush, tush!" said Reynolds.

Lord Daybreak laughed.

"Shall I order the dinner half an hour earlier?"

"Ah! now that is to the point. Yes, I should like my people to have one good square meal all round—is that a paradox?—before we leave. Heaven alone knows where we shall eat the next!"

Farewells were said, heartily enough it is true, but somewhat sadly; that could not be denied. And yet I think the sadness all lay on the side of the ship's crew and not on that of the explorers, who were not only much excited, but very hopeful.

And now they are over the side and away; three men in one boat with a dog, two men in the other, plus a boy—the Lapp—and Keltie.

That ringing cheer as the men crowd into the rigging and wave their caps—will those bold explorers ever hear such another? Again and again it rises on the still air, and while the great dog and Keltie bark, the men in the boats add the sound of their voices, and cheer as well as they can. Then all is silent, till a gun breaks the eerisome stillness of the pack; but in a few minutes' time the ship is hidden by lofty hummocks of ice that rise up from the floes, and they see the *Aurora* no more.

Rowing boats among open ice is tiresome work, and as

often as not men would prefer to drag a whaler over the ice to steering round piece after piece, with the danger perhaps of getting the boat crushed into match-wood by closing bergs or floes. But to-day there is little swell or sea on, and the floes are almost motionless.

Soon, however, it gets closer together, or rather, I should say, it gets closer here and there. Reynolds lands now and then, to climb a hummock and look around him longingly—O, so longingly!—at the distant shore. When he returns he often gives the order to put back or to change the direction.

It is a strange journey—partly a boat cruise and partly a walking tour. “How can this be?” the reader may ask. Why, in this way: they come to patches of flat or hummocky floes so close together that they have to haul up their boats and drag them over the snow, the men sinking in its softness even over their knees.

Long hours of this hard and fatiguing work took place, and matters appeared to be getting worse instead of better. To begin with, the weather once more became dark and cloudy, and snow commenced to fall.

This was not the worst, for not only did the wind rise and moan mournfully round the snow-clad hummocks, but a swell came in from southwards and east and set the floes in motion.

Reynolds thanked God in his inmost soul that neither the wind nor the sea obtained any great height, and he prayed at the same time that this might not be the case, and that Lord Daybreak in his yacht might get safely away into the open sea.

Though tired, the men—they were all men now—continued rowing. They soon came to a lane of open water which ran northwards and west. Up this they pulled until they could see that it was gradually closing in upon them. They must not permit such a catastrophe to happen, and so they once more got their boats upon the ice.

They dragged the boats westward as well as they could, and then came to another lane of water, and this they followed as they had the other.

But again the lane narrows, and narrows at last so rapidly, for a violent squall had come on to blow, that hardly had the boats been dragged up into safety upon the ice-pack before the green sides of the floes closed together with a clash that might have been heard for miles.

"Thank the Lord we ain't down there!" said Joseph with a shudder.

"Amen!" said Reynolds.

They remained for some time on this floe, for all hands were very weary.

"What say you to tea, Joseph?" said Reynolds to his first officer.

Joe had been, like the others, swallowing mouthfuls of the snow. Even the dogs had been doing the same.

"Tea?" cried Colin, "O, that would be jolly!"

So the cooking-range was got out. This was a portion of the equipment that I have not yet mentioned. Nor need I now describe it. There are many such in the market—good, bad, and indifferent. Suffice it to say that the one Reynolds had chosen was most complete and handy, and that the fuel consumed in it was pure spirits of wine.

Portions of the tent were now spread upon the ice, and preparations made for a little *al fresco* tea-party. The men all squatted around the stove; they had their oilskins on and the hoods up, for the wind that continued to blow fitfully was not too warm, and now and then there was borne along on its wings what Scotsmen call flying showers, and Englishmen term Scotch mist. The showers were sleety.

That comfortable tea, with biscuits and butter, which even the honest dog, shared, put life and mettle into every heart. It was resolved, therefore, to continue the journey towards the shore forthwith.

In the centre of the floe or berg on which tea had been served, was a very high hummock of ice. Colin had gone to the top to look round. He stood gazing landwards for fully five minutes, then he called to his captain. Reynolds was soon by his side.

"You see that great ice-mountain yonder, with its green, glittering sides?"

"I see several," said Reynolds, "and you can note from the way the waves are beating against them and sending the spume and spray like smoke high into the sky, that they are all stranded."

"Well, yes, I know. But the berg I wish you to look at is one with another behind it. Yonder!"

"Yes; I see it."

"Keep your eyes on it for a moment."

Reynolds did so.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, as he now noticed that the stranded bergs seemed shifting their positions, "we are in a current like a mill-stream, that is bearing us rapidly southwards. Why, I had not bargained for this."

It was only too true, as their attempt to get farther west towards the land very soon proved. However, they set to work. You never know what you can do till you try. So, as the ice was a little more closely packed, and it was easy to get the boats from piece to piece, they made fair progress.

It was easy to be seen, however, that the farther west they got the stronger grew the awful current. They now came into broader lanes of water, but they were still far away from the open water that washed the shores of Greenland. Moreover, it was found almost impossible to make any great headway through that mill-race current. It was almost as strong as the rapids that, above the great falls of Niagara, have swept many a boat onwards to her doom.

They reached the ice once more, and once more dragging was recommenced with a will. They were at this time, be it understood, somewhat to the southwards of Cape Dan, the position of which is far up north on the east Greenland coast.

"Alas, sir," said Joseph to Captain Reynolds, "this is heartless work!"

"We mustn't let down our courage, Joe; things may take a turn soon."

"I wish the current would take a turn, sir."

"Well, you know, it may, and I think if we could only reach more inshore it might."

The captain's cheerful words seemed to instil hope in every heart, and they continued at their work right cheerily.

The boats were dragged along across a field of well-packed ice. What would it lead to? Open water, thought Reynolds, and everyone was of the same opinion.

"We will reach it," said Reynolds, "in an hour or two at the most; I feel sure of this, and very hopeful. Of course, there may be some floating pieces of ice in it, but the shore, boys, the land, the glorious land, will be beyond; and though the current may for a time sweep us southwards we will reach it at last. Come, Seabird, what say you? You are unusually silent."

"It is," said Sigurd, "because I have not the hope that you have."

Every one was willing to be advised by Sigurd at any time, for all deferred to his great knowledge of "the country", in other words, the sea of ice.

"Suppose, sir," he added respectfully, "we get near to the shore, and then find that there is still a mile of pancake ice to get through, ice which is too small to drag our boats over, and too large to row or push them through without the certainty of their being smashed up in a few minutes."

It must be admitted that Sigurd's speech, an unusually long one, was not couched in English so good as this. Indeed, much of it was intermingled with words from the Norse that Olaf had to translate.

"Well, Seabird," replied Reynolds, "in the event of our meeting with ice such as you describe near to the shore, we will row farther north, and, depend upon it, we shall be able to bore in somewhere. And once on shore we shall dine; then sleep."

"Hurrah!" cried Colin, "that will be good."

But Sigurd only shook his head.

CHAPTER VII.

“FOR GOD HAS GIVEN MAN DOMINION OVER EVEN THE WAVES”—A NIGHT OF TERROR.

AFTER they had advanced about a mile and a half, all hopes of being able to reach the shore, for some time at least, were extinguished in every heart. For instead of reaching the open water they came upon a field of ice of a description that I doubt if even Sigurd had often seen before. Reynolds looked across it towards the distant land in astonishment and blank despair.

What was its character, it may be asked? I will endeavour to tell you in as simple language as I can command. It will be best to compare it with that on which they now stood, and across which they had been dragging their boats till every shoulder ached and burned. This was composed of large floes, or pieces, or bergs—call them what you choose. These pieces were about forty feet square, judging roughly, and many of them were much larger, with hummocks in the centre; all being, of course, covered with snow.

But the ice that now lay before them seemed an awful mixture of pancake ice, which I have already described, and rough, glittering boulders, evidently the wreckage of large bergs smashed to pieces by the wash and force of the sea. Among these there were pools, as it were, of wet slush everywhere, as far as could be seen. A sea like this no boats could navigate, nor could they be dragged across the ice; hardly, indeed, was there foot-hold for a man on it.

Sigurd shook his head once more. All eyes were now turned, naturally enough, on Captain Reynolds. He only nodded and smiled.

“Bad job, isn’t it?” said Colin.

“Seems so. But we must wait, boys; we are all in the hands of Providence. We must hope still. The outlook is

dark at present; but to give way to despair would really be the height of folly."

The outlook certainly was dark enough. Only think of it. They were tired, they were weary, and almost ready to drop. Beneath their feet was a staunch and heavy floe, it is true, but against its sides other great pieces were grinding, with a noise that silenced the moaning of the rising winds. The sky was covered with dark and threatening clouds, cold sleet was steadily falling. All around them the ice-field was heaving to the swell and motion of the waves beneath, while shorewards, if they gazed, they could see great stranded mountains of ice, the seas and slush dashing high against their glassy sides, and rising in the air like the smoke of rolling cataracts.

Reynolds stood on the edge of the floe for many minutes thinking. His men sat on the edge of the boats, or even squatted or lay on the snow. They were waiting for the master to speak. Even the eyes of the great Newfoundland, as he stretched himself with his beautiful head reclining on his fore-paws, were turned towards Reynolds.

He looked round at last. He sighed, or rather he had commenced a sigh, but he stifled it ere it could all escape. Then he laughed lightly, and commenced to talk. His smile or his laugh was a very reassuring one, and lit up an otherwise somewhat serious face, as the rays of the rising sun light up the clouds and change their grays and bronzes to orange and gold.

"Boys," he said, "do you know what that field of ice has just said to me? It has said, 'Thus far shalt thou come, and no further'."

"And what did you reply?" said Olaf smiling.

"I replied proudly and defiantly that farther I would come, and that nothing should prevent me from gaining footing on yonder rocky shore, because God has given man dominion over even the waves."

He paused a moment.

"Was that all?" said Olaf.

"Not quite. You see those lofty icebergs with the seas sweeping their base, and the spume and foam leaping high

against their crystalline sides? Well, these mighty mountains of ice seemed to speak to me in signals."

"And what did the ice-mountains say, sir?"

"They told me that I must keep up my courage and yours, and that I must not be afraid of the current. That current, they said, had swept them down from the far north and stranded them where they now lay, and in a short time they would break up before the mighty force of the waves, because that was the fate of all icebergs; but the current, they told me, was our best friend, that it would sweep us and the floes on which we stand far to the south, and away from the ugly ice-stream that now bars our further progress landwards.

"Boys," he added, "have I given you hope?"

"You have! you have!" they cried.

"Hurrah!" from Colin.

"Wowff! wowff!" from the great dog.

"Wiff! wiff!" from little Keltie.

"Come, then, lads. Show a bold front. Joe, you want a smoke, I know. Well, help up with the tent, and you shall have one. Then we shall dine."

"Then sleep?" asked Colin.

"Yes, sleep, my lad, for we all need it."

Half an hour afterwards the tent was up and dinner was ready. Reynolds, with Olaf by his side, was standing by the edge of the floe as the meal was announced. Perhaps the bold explorer's thoughts were somewhat gloomy, for, it must be confessed, the prospects of the expedition did not look very bright at present.

Far behind the western hills and the wild barrier of inland ice—that Reynolds would have given anything just then to be able to set foot upon—the sun was sinking in gloomy, almost awful splendour. Through the red-edged rifts in the banks of cumulus his rays shot angry saturnine glances across the chafing and moaning sea of ice. Those rays lingered longest on the jagged peaks of the surf-tormented icebergs in yonder, changing the rising spray into an orange-crimson smoke. And now slowly sank the great

luminary; the clouds became bronze, then gray, then almost black.

Night was coming on. A short night it would be, but a night of terror nevertheless.

"We can't make a better of it, can we?" said Reynolds with a kind of forced cheerfulness, as he took Olaf kindly by the arm and led him towards the little tent.

"I think we can, sir," said Olaf.

"How, lad—how?"

"By eating a good dinner."

Well, if the dinner was not what one would expect at a west-end London restaurant, it was at least wholesome, and all, even Cæsar and Keltie, were satisfied.

Then pipes were lit, and after an hour's chat and smoking, prayers were said. Brief these were, it is true, but not the less fervent, and no doubt effectual.

"Now, boys, who shall watch to-night?"

"I will, sir, for two hours to begin with," said Sigurd.

"And I for the next two," said the Lapp lad Svolto.

And so it was arranged.

The rest of the members of the expedition crept quietly into their sleeping-bags, and, despite the roar and turmoil of the sea of pancake ice and slush so close to them, despite the shrieking of the floes as they ground their green sides together, everyone was soon sound asleep.

Sigurd did not like the look of things at all. The wind had risen considerably, and ever and anon a cold, sleety shower was borne along on its wings, so that, strong and hardy as he was, he shivered in its wet and dreary embrace.

An hour later the sleet had changed to snow, that fell in flakes of such immense size, that in a very brief space of time the whole "country" was covered inches deep.

Then it ceased as quickly as it had come on; the sky now cleared, the stars shone out, and in the eastern horizon appeared the red, red moon.

Moon and stars give ever an air of solemnity to scenery, but under their weird and dreamy light scenery like that

around this strange encampment was impressive in the extreme. Even Sigurd, simple and but semi-tutored though his mind was, felt almost awed as he gazed around him.

This was a dead sea he stood in the midst of, and the snow, he could not help thinking, was its winding-sheet, while the mournful sounds proceeding from the floes was but its dirge. Yes, everything seemed dead around him—the snow-clad boats looked as if they had been deserted for a hundred years, the tent in its mantle of white looked like a tent of the dead.

Mercy! were they dead within it? He walked towards the entrance and lifted a corner of the frozen canvas, but was only reassured when he crept through, and listened for a time to the loud breathing of the sleepers.

It was time to wake Svolto to keep his watch. A ray of moonlight stole in through a crevice and fell on the boy's face. Little Keltie was snuggled up in his arms, and the two looked so comfortable that Sigurd had not the heart to disturb them.

So he stole out again as silently as he had entered.

The wind still blew high. It blew even higher, and strange pranks the waves or swell was now playing among that pack of pancake ice and broken bergs.

They say that every seventh wave is the highest. Well, it might have been the strength of the seventh wave, but every now and again, as Sigurd looked landward across that ice, the commotion was marvellous; not only were pieces of green ice and spray dashed high in the air, but seas of slush as well, and at times the edges of the round, flat pieces were raised high in the air, or the pancakes were themselves completely overturned. Nor was this all, for the slush and broken pieces were cast high up on the edge of the floe on which the camp was placed, and more than once lumps of ice as big as half-bricks were pitched over the sentry's head, falling on the snow beside the tent.

Cold? O, bitterly cold! Sigurd was a man much more fond of exertion than dreaming, so he now drew the hood or cowl of his oilskin across his face and commenced walking rapidly up and down across the snow-clad floe.

The moon rose higher and higher, and now the night was as clear almost as day. Then commenced an adventure which I must relate, although it added to the horror of this dreary night. About a mile up north on a rocky island a huge bear crept out of his den and gazed seawards across the ice. His wife followed him and took her place by his side; and had you seen them standing there in the clear moonlight, you would have confessed that all the bears ever you had seen would have sunk into insignificance beside those lordly brutes.

I am going to put their thoughts in words; it is a way I have when telling a story about the lower animals.

"Lovely night!" said Mr. Bruin, after yawning so loud that all the rocks in the neighbourhood resounded.

"Lovely night!" said Mrs. Bruin. She never attempted to contradict her lord and master, knowing from dire experience the exact weight of that huge right paw of his.

"And I do feel so hungry, you wouldn't believe!" he said.

"And yet we made a good supper, hubbie."

"Only the shoulder of a seal and one little Eskimo boy we found playing by the shore. What is that to a bear like me? Now all the seals have gone, and I could eat a bladder nose to-night. O, look," he added, "what is that dark on the ice far down yonder?"

"A seal or two it must be," said his wife.

"O, come," cried Mr. Bruin excitedly, "I'm off."

"O, my dear, don't venture. You and I—for I'll go if you go—can never cross that raging current. And you know, hubbie, you're not over well. You'll catch your death of cold."

"But I'm going, old lady," he roared. "You can stay if you please. I believe yonder thing is a man, and I'm going to pick his bones. I haven't tasted man—since—since—"

"Since supper," said his wife.

"Bother!" roared Bruin, "that was but a boy. I want to eat a man."

Splash! splash! Both Bruin and his wife have leapt off the rock. For a moment or two the dark water seems to

have engulfed them. Next moment both might have been seen heading for the north-east. They were too wise to attempt swimming straight across.

It was a long swim and a strong swim. A bladder-nose seal more than once rose quite close to them. The bears saw him, but were powerless to give battle. A great narwhal or sea-unicorn, pursuing his lonesome way through the darkling water, his ten-foot spear of ivory glittering in the moon-beams every time he rose to the surface, passed athwart their very noses. That unicorn could have transfixed the two as they swam side by side.

Olaf had a strange dream a short time after this. He thought he was walking with Colin on a lonely ice-field, when through an opening therein a terrible beast, with fearsome eyes and long, slimy arms, uprose, and winding those arms around his friend, dragged him down to death in the cold, black sea.

Olaf awoke with a scream. Colin was aroused too. Both got out.

"I'm going to relieve the sentry," said Colin; "I'm sure he has done more than his watch."

"I'll go too."

They were standing close together on the floe, which was rocking from side to side like a ship in a sea-way.

Bruin and his wife had reached the pack some time before. They had shaken themselves dry, or as dry as possible, and were now moving on at a shambling kind of a trot to attack the camp. On a neighbouring piece of ice rose a tall hummock. Behind this they hid for a moment to reconnoitre.

"I told you it was a man," said Mr. Bruin. "Now there are three. No, one's a boy. He don't count. Are you ready, wife?"

"Let's have another squint," said his wife.

"O, look, look!" cried Olaf. "Guns, Colin, guns! Bears behind the ice!"

Both made a rush to the tent, shouting "Bears! bears!" Joseph and Reynolds wriggled out of their bags, but only half-asleep.

"Now!" cried Mr. Bruin, "now!"

Both bears bellowed. It was a roar that might have dismayed the stoutest heart. It struck no terror to Sigurd's, however. The she-bear was first, and he hit her with all his force on the forehead. The oar snapped in twain. He struck her again with the part he still retained. Howling and bleeding she sprang at him in desperation, and he rolled beneath the boat's side.

Something dark goes pattering across the floe. It is Keltie, and like a tiny fury he seized the great he-bear's hind-foot. Out rushed Colin and Olaf with their rifles. Bruin had turned round to lay Keltie dead on the snow. But Keltie sprang away in time, and next moment two bullets from Olaf's little light rifle entered the bear's chest behind the shoulder and stretched him dead on the snow. Colin's rifle was not loaded.

Sigurd, however, was not hurt; he drew his knife, sprang to his feet, and struck wildly at the she-bear. Ill, indeed, would Sigurd have fared had not Colin and Olaf seized oars and attacked the monster from the rear. She wheeled to defend herself. Caesar had attempted to catch her throat, but failed. Then blow after blow fell on her head, and Sigurd's knife tells home again and again.

This battle with the bears must have been begun and finished in less than two minutes.

No one thought of sleeping any more that night. Where there are two bears there may be twenty, so it behoved them to be on their guard.

While the Lapp boy proceeded to whip the skin off the she-bear, Olaf knelt down in the snow beside Mr. Bruin.

"Sigurd! Colin! Reynolds!" he suddenly shouted. "Run, O, run! This is the bear that slew my father! Look at the scars—look, look! Say, is it not so, Sigurd? Speak, man, speak!"

Sigurd slowly examined the bear.

"It would really seem so," he said.

Then Olaf burst into tears, but only for a few moments. He was himself again very soon.

"Skin him, Sigurd," he said, "for I cannot."

Now, in spite of even Sigurd's opinion, I think it highly improbable that this *was* the bear that had slain Captain Ranna. But if to believe so made Olaf happy, we cannot begrudge him that belief.

The storm-wind continued to rage. It waxed even fiercer. The noise and turmoil among the floes were now fearful. A huge corner was broken off from the camp-floe, speedily smashed to atoms, and for a time spray and slush and green boulders were hurled high into the air, and fell on the tent and on the boats. Our heroes were glad to seek for shelter beneath the canvas.

But this wet bombardment ceased after a time. It was evident, however, to Reynolds and his people that the present position was no longer tenable. They must endeavour to reach the next boulder, above whose hummocks the bears' heads had first been seen. This was not only much larger but much stronger.

So the tent was hurriedly struck and folded, and in five minutes' time the first boat was hauled across the chasm and placed in safety. In ten minutes both boats were secured.

But there were still some little odds and ends to be gathered off the smaller floe, and these Sigurd and the Lapp were picking up while Reynolds stood near them, the two dogs being apparently very interested spectators.

The flush of coming day was already gradually spreading itself over the eastern sky. The dawn and the moonlight seemed struggling for the mastery. Reynolds' eyes were turned towards the hills of the west, and he was longing to be over or on the great inland ice, when suddenly there was a report like that of a heavy piece of ordnance. The smaller floe had split into three pieces!

O, the terror and the turmoil of the next few minutes! Those on the larger ice-floe knew well that their friends were engulfed, but for some time they were powerless to act or move, being half-drowned in the drenching spray.

Joseph was perhaps the first to regain presence of mind. "Get out the ropes, boys. Steady, lads, steady! Easily and cheerily does it."

The ropes were speedily hauled out.

Down yonder was something struggling in the spume and slush. So a rope was thrown in that direction, and Reynolds himself, nearly half-dead apparently, was brought to bank. Sigurd was bearing up manfully. He was clinging to a green lump of ice, but rising and falling, and in danger every moment of being killed by the dashing ice.

The Lapp boy was nearer the berg. He caught the rope thrown to Sigurd. Would he save himself and leave his friend probably to suffer a fearful death? No, to his credit and honour,—no.

He swam, or rather wriggled, back through the slush, and handed Sigurd the rope. It broke just as they were on the point of being pulled on to the ice, but Joseph had caught Sigurd's clothes with a boat-hook, and soon both were saved. But where were Cæsar and Keltie? A question not difficult to answer. Keltie had somehow managed to tell Cæsar that he (Keltie) was not much of a swimmer.

"Get on my back, then," said Cæsar.

Then he managed to scramble on to one of the largest pieces of the wrecked floe, and there stood barking at our friends, who were all safe now on the larger one.

"Wowff! wowff!" barked Cæsar. "How are we to get over?" As he spoke he shook himself, and made a pretty moonlight rainbow. Then he pretended he was going to leap into the cold, slushy water again.

"Back!" shouted Colin in terror; "back, Cæsar, back!"

The good dog obeyed.

Then Joseph, as quickly as possible, with Olaf's nimble assistance, got out one of the light sledges. When a portion of the tent canvas was spread in the bottom, it formed a capital gangway or bridge.

Down it was hauled, and, waiting till the two floes came pretty close, the temporary bridge was quickly run across.

The grand dog understood all. He gave one little impatient bark as he looked round at little Keltie, as much as to say "Come on", then trotted over, followed by his friend.

Only just in time. Away slid the smaller berg, and the end of the bridge dropped. It was speedily hauled up.

Next minute came the seventh wave, and the floes came clashing together with frightful force. Had either men or dogs been then in the water they would have been crushed to pulp. Luckily all were on the large floe and safe. The tent, too, was up, and Colin lit the lamp. In a very short time Reynolds, Sigurd, and Svolto had changed their garments, and were drinking warm tea, joined by their companions.

Then the sun rose, and it was day once more.

After this very early breakfast everyone felt more hearty and quite refreshed. Had there been any more dragging to do they were ready for work at once.

Reynolds climbed to the top of the hummock, to look around him and consider how matters stood. Olaf was soon by his side, for he had become very fond of his captain.

"Look!" said the latter, "we have drifted some distance south, but not as far as I expected. And now you will observe, Olaf, that what the great stranded icebergs told me is in a measure true. The current has carried our heavier floes past most of that horrid pancake part, and it is evident, too, that we are much nearer to the shore."

"I can see," said Olaf, looking southwards, "that we will soon float past that pancake sea, for it ends a mile or two down yonder."

"Yes, and there is the open water. The wind, you see, has had a restraining effect upon the progress south of that soft sea of ice, while this mill-stream of a current has been swirling us along."

"There is every probability, however, Olaf, that we may come into collision with that stranded iceberg yonder, over which the waves are breaking with such awful fury."

"And if so, sir?"

"Don't talk of it, my friend. It is too dreadful even to contemplate. Big as this floe is, if hurled against the hard green side of yonder mountain of ice, it would be dashed to pieces in an instant. Quick would be our death, Olaf; speedy the end of our little expedition."

To the extreme satisfaction, however, of everyone, no sooner had the floe on which they were now encamped

passed the edge of the great pancake stream than it swirled round and appeared to be caught in a reverse current.

No wonder that all hands now raised such a joyous shout; a cheer that even the dogs joined, for they had apparently but to get the boats lowered, and in an hour or two at most they would be safely ashore on the promised land, as Captain Reynolds called it.

So ended that night of terror.

CHAPTER VIII.

SVOLTO AND HIS HILL-FIEND—A QUEER RACE OF SAVAGES.

IT was not till after three hours of toilsome rowing and struggling with tides and currents that our brave explorers found themselves standing on the rocky shores of the promised land. And now, once more the cheering was renewed, for all were happy at last.

From the way the great dog Caesar went dashing about, and round and round, it was pretty evident he considered all further danger was now at an end, and that the Granite City and his cosy home in Union Street were only just a little way round the corner of the rocky hill. Keltie was of precisely the same opinion, and the capers and antics of the pair of them were comical in the extreme.

The promised land? Yes, it was the promised land; but certainly not a land flowing with milk and honey. The hills rose high and rugged behind them, but it was a pleasure to see grass and moss growing on them, heather also, and many a sweet little flower that is met with in the Shetland islands, in Norway, and in Scotland itself.

The sun even shone warmly against the rocks, birds of nearly all the species common to these seas and lands flew around in flocks or perched upon the rocks. The din and screaming they made mingled strangely with the low moan of the waves breaking upon the beach.

Eastwards, when they turned their eyes, there was the dark sea, over which they had rowed, with many a floating white floe slowly rising and falling on the swell, and with seals here and there warming themselves in the sun's bright rays. Far beyond was the sea of ice itself. It looked cold and drear now, and Colin and Olaf shuddered as they thought of the dangers they had passed through on the preceding night.

A flock of birds flew overhead and attracted their attention. Olaf followed them with his eyes. They were a covey of snipe of some sort, and the temptation to follow them was too great to be resisted. They had settled among the rocks not a great way off, so they ran back for a couple of fowling-pieces which formed part of the equipment. Olaf also carried his rifle slung over his shoulder.

"For," he said, "we might stumble across a bear, you know."

They saw no bears that day, however; but, nevertheless they returned to the camp—the tent was now erected—with what Sigurd declared was an excellent bag, namely, five snipe and a small seal's liver. They had found the "drochie" sunning itself on the rocks, had stalked and killed it, though Colin said it did seem a pity to destroy the poor little fellow while enjoying his seaside holiday.

The snipe were skinned, spitted, and cooked along with some fat bacon, a piece of the seal's liver, and some biscuits and vegetables. The whole formed a most delectable Irish stew, and, washed down with hot coffee, made our heroes feel that they were once more alive.

Reynolds resolved to stop here for one day at least, to permit his people to enjoy a spell of much-needed repose.

After breakfast—they called it so because it was still early in the forenoon—pipes were lit, and for a time the conversation was cheerful and animated. One by one, however, they began to feel drowsy, and a general call was made for the sleeping-bags. It was so warm they might have done without these, but it was ever so much more cosy with them.

Svolto sat down on a high, flat rock in the sun, just a little way above the tent. It was his sentry-go. But Cæsar

and Keltie resolved to keep him company, and lay down near to him.

The sun was shining over the eastern ice when our heroes turned in. It was away round behind the hills when they turned out again. And all this time Cæsar and Keltie had been the real sentries, for, I am ashamed to say, Svolto, overcome with fatigue, was guilty of the heinous crime of going to sleep on duty. He did so most deliberately too. He simply whispered a few words in the Norse language—which he felt certain the dogs understood—into Cæsar's ear, and then curled himself up beside his gun.

"Wowff!"

"Wiff! wiff! wiff! wiff!"

Svolto started to his feet, rifle in hand. There was never a more completely wide-awake Laplander in creation than Svolto was at that moment. Cæsar's hair was all on end. So, too, was Keltie's.

And as he rubbed his eyes Svolto felt certain he had seen a dark little figure, somewhat in the shape of a human being, disappearing round the corner of a distant rock. Svolto's hair stood on end next, and almost lifted his fur cap. The poor superstitious boy really believed he had seen a hill-fiend, bogey, or spirit of evil.

The camp was soon all astir once more, and Svolto made his report. Reynolds laughed heartily at the hill-fiend notion.

"It was an Eskimo lad," he said, "and I expect they have a village not far off. We shall soon see more of them."

I think that the Eskimos found on this coast, and around other shores in Greenland, are about the most harmless little people in existence.

If Eskimos have never seen civilized people before, they are naturally very much alarmed, and will hide in the holes of the rocks or scuttle off like rabbits. But these squat wee men and women are not difficult to tame, and soon become very friendly indeed.

The secret of Svolto's hill-fiend was not cleared up that night, for although Colin, Olaf, and Reynolds himself made a journey round the shore and rocks in the hopes of finding

an Eskimo encampment, they could discover no trace of such people, nor any footmarks on the beach.

But they made a discovery that was not unimportant. They found out that the land on which they had camped was in reality an island, though divided from the continent by but a small channel of water, which was now entirely covered with ice and snow.

There were no footprints on this either, so Svolto's little man must have come from somewhere or other in a kayak or small canoe. They were obliged to be satisfied with this supposition, and so the night closed quietly in.

Joseph took the first watch that night and Colin the middle. I do not think that anything could have induced Svolto to take up his position on those weird gray rocks and do sentry-go. Of ordinary dangers on the ice or elsewhere he had no fear. He would face either bladder-nose seal or bear bravely, even cheerfully, but the awful little figure that he had seen running round the rocky corner! Ugh! he dared not even think of him.

Joseph came to call Colin a little after twelve. The young man required no second bidding, but wriggled quickly and quietly out of his bag, leaving Olaf sound asleep. But not Cæsar. Cæsar had been in the sleeping-bag, for he was like a Christian in all his wise ways, but he considered now that it was his duty to keep watch with Colin. Keltie had been with Joe, so that when two retired, a man and a dog, another man and dog took up their post on the rocks.

A whole half hour passed away, during which time Colin had paced briskly to and fro on the ledge of rock to keep himself warm. Cæsar had a far cosier coat than that which his master wore, and so could curl up with his tail under his nose, and go to sleep, though with one ear at half-cock.

The sky was still perfectly clear, the stars very bright. So near at hand did they appear that it seemed almost possible to reach them.

How still it was now! For the wind had sunk entirely. There were the mournful boom and lapping of the waves on

the dark rocks, and now and then a plaintive cry as of some belated night-bird; but that was all. By and by, far across the ice-fields, a yellow light appeared low down on the eastern sky, and soon the moon's broad rim showed up above the slowly-moving hummocks.

If the scene had been impressive before, much more so was it now. There was a solemnity about it which is indescribable, and which sank deep into Colin's heart. His thoughts were drawn from earth away. For all around him was so still, so lonesome and eerie. His sleeping friends were no company for him, not even the sleeping dog. He was more really alone than ever he had felt before in life. As lonely did he feel as though he had been the last man on earth, and nothing lived below but he.

Is it any wonder then that, under such circumstances, on a night so strangely still, and amidst scenery so weird and wild, his thoughts were carried far above the twinkling stars to the bright sphere where angels dwell, and all is happiness and joy. Just then he remembered that he had scarcely said his prayers that night, or had done so but hurriedly.

And so, now, he knelt beside a rocky boulder, and somehow he seemed very near to God, and felt that He was his friend; the friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Would He bless and prosper their little expedition? Colin fervently prayed that He might, and carry them safely through every danger back once more to their homes in far-off Scotland. Do not smile, if I tell you that in this prayer of Colin's he included even the dogs. They were God's creatures; He had made, and He cared for them.

Colin, somehow, felt much more light-hearted and happy after this. He even began to sing. A song could not disturb the sleepers, though it sounded strange among these lonesome hills. But it mingled with Olaf's dreams and those of Rudland Syme. It carried the former back to his bonnie nor'land home, and once again he was climbing the hills and wandering in the summer woods above the fjord. But after a time Rudland awoke. The moonbeams streamed through the crevices in the tent end and invited him out.

"Have I disturbed you, Rudland? It was so foolish of me to sing."

"Not in the least, Colin. I often walk abroad at night. And on such a night as this. Why, it is lovely! heavenly!"

"Look, look!" he continued, grasping Colin by the arm and pointing hillwards. "What light is that?"

"Why, it must be the moon shining on a morsel of quartz," said Colin.

"No, no; see, it moves, and now it has disappeared just beneath that dark ledge."

Colin thought of Svolto's hill-fiend. Could this be it? And was the wild creature really a kind of brownie or spunkie after all?

"Colin M'Ivor, I'm going to find out the secret of that light."

"But you cannot go alone, and I dare not leave my post."

"I shall go alone. I like adventures by night. I will take my gun though."

He entered the tent as he spoke, and presently reappeared armed.

Instead of following along the rough beach towards the distant spot where the light had disappeared, he kept well out of the moonlight, and sought the shadow of rock and boulder all along. In time he came to a brae that rose slantingly up from the beach. It was white with flowering saxifrage and redolent of wild thyme. High up yonder rose the cliff, and very soon Rudland was at the foot of it. He walked quickly all round, but there appeared to be no opening anywhere.

He was about to give up the search, when suddenly there fell upon his ear the sound of voices. Soft and low and musical, but human nevertheless. Then a bush that grew near him was drawn aside, and a stream of light shone out. And there, close to him, stood Svolto's little man. So close that Rudland could touch him. And that is precisely what he did do. Nay, more, he caught him by the shoulder. The little man screamed like one in a nightmare, but wriggled clear, and rushed into his cave. The bold doctor followed.

The scene presented to his view was a droll one in the

extreme. But I must tell you that Rudland Syme, although he was very fond of anatomy, and said to be a most careful student of his "part" or portion of the body sold to him to investigate with forceps and scalpel, and therefore quite at home in the sickly aroma of the dissecting-room, thought twice before venturing into this cave.

He thought twice, and then sat down on a ledge of rock in the doorway. Rudland had never seen a real live Eskimo before in his own wild home. Here were over a dozen of them of all ages and sexes. And although, from an ethnological point of view the sight might have been called an interesting and instructive one, there was a sad absence of romance about it.

Two huge lamps were burning in the cave—burning, smoking, and smelling abominably; a small dead seal, about half-devoured and almost wholly decayed, lay in the middle of the floor. Round about were benches, and on these, with hardly a stitch of clothing on them, lay, sweltering as if in a hot bath, the ugly little Eskimos.

Rudland's bold entrance was the signal for a general panic. All screamed and gibbered at him, pointing their dirty fingers towards him, and repeating over and over again some words he did not understand. They did not scream aloud, however; it was this same nightmarish moan that the little man had given utterance to when Rudland Syme caught him by the shoulder.

And while they gibbered and screamed like owls, they huddled, one on top of the other, until they were all in a heap in the corner.

The doctor tried to ingratiate himself by grinning and nodding, but for a time with no result.

Then he remembered that he had some tobacco. He lit his own pipe, and began to smoke, seeing which a little man approached a little closer and began to sniff. Rudland gave him a little screw of tobacco, which he instantly consigned to his mouth. Rudland gave him another morsel. That also he was raising to his mouth, when a skinny, naked, and deformed old dwarf snatched it from him as cleverly as a monkey would have done, and put it in his own.

The ice was broken. Tobacco did it, for the doctor had enough for all the old folks.

It was evident to Rudland Syme that these were all members of the same family, and that this cave was not their real home, the probability being that they were here on a hunting and fishing expedition. But as conversation was impossible, after nodding and grinning again and again, the visitor took his departure and returned to camp to tell Colin of his singular adventure. Then he went back to bed.

At breakfast-time next day, that Eskimo family paid a visit to the camp, and although there was not much to give away, still the strange creatures had a bit of what there was.

Reynolds was glad to find that Sigurd could talk their curious, but by no means unmusical language. Much information was therefore gleaned from them concerning the coast.

Sigurd found out that farther north was a large colony of Eskimos, who lived by hunting and fishing, and had large tents and many fine things, and that this colony had its town or village at the top of a fjord. The journey, however, must be made by sea, and the little man whom Svolto had mistaken for a spirit of evil, undertook to pilot them in his kayak, which was hidden in the cave. Svolto was not even yet very sure of this wee, wee man, who certainly was ugly enough to be anything belonging either to this world or a far worse.

The camp, therefore, was struck that day at ten o'clock, and everything packed once more on board the boats.

All that day the water was pretty open, and as the current favoured them, they made excellent progress, and encamped towards evening on the bare rocks, amidst scenery of the most savage and lonesome character.

Next day they opened up the fjord, but now the journey or voyage was by no means so easy, owing to the packing of the ice floes. The way had frequently to be cleared for the boats by means of boat-hooks and oars. Finally, towards sunset, tired and weary, they were glad to seek for rest and refuge on a small rocky island on the fjord, where,

after supper, all went to sleep in their bags, except Olaf, whose first watch it was.

During the night their little guide had slipped away in his kayak. This was thought somewhat strange, but there was no chance of losing their way in the fjord, which now got narrower and narrower every mile, the rocks rising directly up from the water, the air crowded with myriads of sea and land birds.

About noon they reached the Eskimo village, behind which rose, steep and bare, the everlasting hills and mountains, with here and there the glittering edge of a glacier.

They now found out the reason of their guide's desertion. He came rushing to meet the wanderers on the beach, and told Sigurd he had gone before to warn the villagers of the approach of the strangers, lest they should be afraid, and hide themselves and their families in the caves and under the rocks.

The guide had certainly spoken in glowing terms of the kindness and liberality of our heroes, for as soon as the boats were hauled up, they came crowding close around; far too near, indeed, to be exactly pleasant, for, as Joseph told Sigurd, a rose by almost any name would have smelt quite as sweet.

This tribe of Eskimos had a whole pack of dogs. By no means handsome were these, and as wild as wolves. When Cæsar landed on the beach amongst these curs, towering like a veritable canine giant high above them, he created quite as great a sensation as his mighty namesake of old must have done among the ancient Britons.

First and foremost they yelped in terror and fled in all directions. Then they barked in anger and defiance at a safe distance. Cæsar answered with a ringing "Wowff" or two, that made the very hills resound, and struck terror into their hearts. Keltie chimed in with his usual "Wiff, wiff, wiff," but not content with this, he charged right into the centre of the pack.

Cæsar, afraid his friend might get into serious trouble, for his die-hard audacity would have availed but little against their numbers, dashed in to his relief, and a fight

ensued such as probably had never been known in Greenland before, the great dog seizing the Eskimo dogs one by one and throwing them over his shoulder.

He soon quelled the riot. But poor little Keltie was dead apparently. When, however, Olaf bent over him almost crying, and Colin made the remark that they would have to bury him on the beach, then Keltie found it incumbent on him to open his left eye. His right eye was full of blood.

"Why, the doggie isn't dead!" cried Colin.

"Not yet," said Keltie, trying to rise.

Then he was given into the charge of Cæsar, and that noble fellow lay down beside him in the sunshine, and soon succeeded in licking his little friend back to life once more.

It was soon evident enough to our heroes, that although the Eskimo who had guided them to this village was small in stature, and he certainly was no Goliath of Gath, he possessed mental qualities that enabled him to rule among these simple and good-natured savages as a kind of chief. I must not say "king", because kings are practically unknown in this part of the world. Tittlo Moko—that was the chief's name—had said that the strangers could be trusted—trusted they therefore were. And there was nothing half-hearted about this trustfulness on the part of the Eskimos. They literally received the explorers with open arms. No; I will not go so far as to say that anyone took advantage of such proffered embraces. The temptation was not sufficiently strong.

Were they all very small, all very ugly, all very black, and all very dirty? These questions from my readers, I think I hear ringing in my ears. I will answer them as briefly as I can. As for size, they were certainly not dwarfs, but they were of low stature, and the men were squat. Their dress, probably, contributed in no small degree to their squatness. A skin or fur cap, a kind of skin jersey, skin breeches, and boots of the same material that came up nearly to the knees, in many cases above, and were somewhat of the pattern of those used by fox-hunters, or by our grandfathers in days of old.

Yes, the girls and women dressed the same—"rational dress" I believe they term it in this country—with this simple difference, that the females wore a tiny apron that a Highlander might have worn on his kilt if unfortunate enough to lose his sporran. But the girls showed more taste as to their boots than the men, and had them neatly embroidered with tiny morsels of coloured skin. These, too, as a rule went bare-headed, their hair being done up in a fashionable dome on top of the head. This dome of hair had a kind of rake aft, and was not unbecoming.

As to appearance, the men were no beauties; the older women were hags as a rule, and some were exceedingly fat. But a few of the girls—it was Olaf who found this out—were both modest-looking and pretty. As for being black, they were nothing of the sort. Their skins were of a lightish bronze.

No, they were not all very dirty; in fact the girls would have passed for clean in some country villages that I know of. As for the women and men—well, the only ablution they ever submit to is that from a shower of rain, while hailstones, I suppose, would cause them to look a little spotty. The children, not to mince matters, looked as if they had swam in a sewer then dried themselves in the sun. But if they did not use water, they make up for it by rubbing their faces with train oil.

Reynolds walked towards the village accompanied by probably all the inhabitants thereof. But they were by no means noisy or offensive in their attentions.

The tents were made of skins. Inside were the usual rows of benches on which several families could squat, the dividing partitions not being so high as those in a large dog-kennel. Each family bench had its own pan of oil burning near it. Dried seal meat and fish they had in common, and many other comforts.

Sigurd was told by the guide that they used these skin-tents in summer, but during winter turned over to snow-igloos. These snow-houses are by no means uncomfortable if well built, and they are warmer far than the name seems to indicate.

I would not call these Eskimos savages. They are really very peaceably inclined, and compare favourably with civilized nations in some ways, for I have never heard of murders among them, nor any other fearful crime.

Reynolds and his people were looked upon as the greatest curiosities. They were examined all over and commented on, especially by the ladies of the village. Their dress excited much interest, and a good deal of mirth.

"Colin," cried Olaf that day after dinner, "I've made quite a conquest. This girl, I believe, has fallen in love with me."

He was sitting on a rock, and she stood near him.

"Isn't she pretty?" he asked. "I call her a poem."

"Well, if she had a Turkish bath and a suit of decent clothes she might pass muster on a market-day."

"Colin, there is a lack of 'romancesomeness' about you that at times is to be deplored."

"Shooe-a-leig-a!" cried the girl, suddenly thrusting the points of her dirty fingers right into Olaf's eyes. Then she ran away laughing, and the "romancesomeness" was all at an end.

Sigurd told Olaf that the girl didn't believe those very blue eyes of his were real, and she merely wanted to prove whether they were so or not.

"Real or not," said Olaf, "she has pretty nearly gouged them out."

"That is precisely what she hoped to do, I believe, Olaf," said Colin. "She thought they were pebbles; and, come to consider it, they don't look unlike pebbles. Had she been successful, she would have strung them on a bit of skin and worn them round her neck as a charm."

Well, the curiosity of the Eskimos, it will be perceived, really knew no bounds. Nothing that the explorers did escaped their notice, and everything was freely commented on and laughed over.

Reynolds was sorry he had so little to give them. Not that they were greedy by any means. They were so good-natured, that they would have parted with anything they possessed and demanded nothing in return.

Even tobacco was scarce with the explorers, but they distributed to the older men all they could spare, and before they left this encampment entirely, Olaf hit upon a capital plan to reward them for their kindly hospitality. He cut off three or four buttons from his own dress, and everyone else did the same. There always are a few buttons on one's clothes that can be spared, and it was these that Olaf requisitioned. Then he distributed them among the ladies of the tribe—I might have said “fair sex” instead of ladies, but that would be cruelly sarcastic.

But there was a good deal to be learned from even these Eskimos, especially in the matter of boating and fishing; and, as Reynolds was very busy taking notes and observations, which he meant to publish on his return, he agreed with Joseph and the rest that it would be well to stay on here for some days.

There were large skin boats called “amyaks” and smaller called “kayaks”. The syllable “yak” ends so many Eskimo words that Peterhead whalers call the Eskimos “Yaks”. At least, I am of opinion that it was in this way that the name originated.

Olaf and his belle had made it up, and renewed their “romancesomeness”, our hero first and foremost stipulating, through the medium of the interpreter Sigurd, that she must not poke any more fingers in his eyes. To this stipulation she quickly consented, and seemed glad to be forgiven.

Then the pair went on the ice together, dragging with them a couple of light kayaks. The girl, first and foremost, gave an exhibition of her skill, and for one so young it was really marvellous. She looked like a skip-jack on the water, and it appeared to be all so easy too.

At last Olaf ventured on board his, which his *inamorata* did her best to hold steady for him. The sensation of boarding one of these skiffs is somewhat similar to that of getting on a safety bicycle for the first time, only, of course, the danger is much greater, but like the safety, if you want the kayak to go one way, it is bound to go the other, like Paddy’s pig; then, again, if you find yourself going, you are nearly certain to lean heavily to the side, and that ensures

you having a spill. Well, a spill from a cycle may mean merely a bruise or a shake, but a spill from a kayak in the Greenland seas means not only a bath at a very low temperature, with a gallon, more or less, of salt water down your throat, but the danger of your becoming food for some roving shark.

Olaf's sweetheart, whom he had named Heather Bloom, kept his kayak on a level keel for a time, then she let go, and Olaf began to paddle, and paddle, and paddle.

"Why," he said to himself, "it is as simple as—"

He was going to say *skilöbning*, but he never finished the sentence. He was engulfed. He stuck to the paddle. The kayak stuck to him.

Had not Heather Bloom speedily come to his assistance and helped to right him and the kayak, Olaf would have dropped out of my story just here. After the recovery of his body I should have had to dig a grave for him by the sad sea wave, and the natives would have had his kayak buried with him, perhaps. Perhaps not, for I am sorry to say that though a superstitious people, the Eskimos—at least this colony—have no form of worship, unless it be salaaming sometimes to the sun in early summer, going crawling towards it, over the snow, with their heads upon the ground.

Colin did not trust himself in a kayak. You see, he had no Heather Bloom to take him in tow or in charge. But in three days' time Olaf became a fairly good if not an accomplished "kayakist". Kayakist is a new word; it is not over-euphonious, but any lexicographer is welcome to it.

One morning Reynolds, having seen all he could see, and written all he could write, gave the order for the start. The day before had been spent in getting everything in order for the long and dangerous journey across Greenland to Disko Bay. In the afternoon a general inspection had taken place, and Reynolds gave the members of his expedition great praise for the thorough cleanliness of all the traps, including skier and sledges and scientific instruments.

Olaf declared that there were tears in the eyes of Heather Bloom when he bade her good-bye and gave her a button.

The button, he asked Sigurd, to explain was a token of betrothal; she was to be as good as she could be, and to wait till he came back to marry her.

"Well," said Sigurd in English, "I fear me, Master Olaf, she will have to wait a big time."

"That's where the 'romancesomeness' comes in," said Olaf.

I fear Olaf was somewhat of a flirt.

"Men," cried Reynolds, pointing to the hills, "yonder lies our route! Westward, ho!"

His people cheered. The Eskimos joined feebly. Their cheer was like the lament of a dozen Dorking hens on a rainy day, a sound that was mournful, almost oppressive.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DISMAL PRAIRIE OF VIRGIN SNOW

WITH many a kindly "good-bye" to those East-coast Eskimos that all knew they should never, never see again, they started to climb the steep hill that lay in front of them.

The men, however, gave most material assistance now. They hauled the sledges, in fact they almost carried them up the first hill, which was nearly a thousand feet in height. Indeed, so good-natured were these poor fellows that they would have carried Reynolds himself and his merry men as well had they been invited to do so.

Climbing the high hill brought them on a sort of table-land, which went stretching away northwards until bounded by a steep cliff, that must have been at least five hundred feet in height. The snow on the table-land was somewhat soft, and, believing that it would be firmer higher up, Reynolds determined to gain the top of the cliff.

The Eskimos gladly accompanied them, and showed such wonderful agility among the slippery rocks, that in two

hours' time all were landed on the cliff-top. There were higher hills still, far away to the north, or rather what appeared to be, but viewed through the lorgnettes they were seen to be very distant mountain-tops rising over the vast prairie-land of snow that went stretching away and away towards the west and the nor'ard, until bounded by the blue indistinct lines of the horizon.

"Thank them once more kindly," said Reynolds to Sigurd, "and tell the little man who guided us from the southern island that if we are not driven back by force of circumstances the boats we have left will belong to him and his people."

So away went the Eskimos, and after taking one last look at the splendid panorama along the east coast that lay far down at their feet—the white field of ice, the dark-blue open sea, the bluer sky, with many a fleecy cloud floating low on the horizon, and nearer still, the gray rocks, the flowery banks, and the tents of the encampment—the explorers set their faces towards the west. Cæsar and Keltie gave a joyous bark or two, and away they trudged.

After an hour's work hauling over the snow—and hard uphill work it was—Reynolds called a halt, and preparations for the evening's meal and night's bivouac were at once commenced.

"I only wanted," he said, "to feel that we really had made a start, else I should have encamped nearer to the sea."

They had, as the barometer told them, reached an altitude of 2500 feet above the sea-level, and although the ice had been fairly good all the way, not having been used to wearing *skier* for some time, Joseph and Rudland found their ankles and insteps rather painful and stiff. Reynolds himself felt tired, though he kept the fact to himself.

What a delight it was to get inside the tent now and to sit down to their frugal supper, washed down by those warm and soul-comforting cups of tea!

After supper, leaving the smokers to smoke, Colin and Olaf, who had not yet given themselves up to the unnecessary slavery of tobacco, walked out to look at the night. It was indeed a lovely one. The whole of the west was lit up with

the most brilliant of clouds, where the sun had just gone down. On the mountain-tops, far to the north, and whose summits were clad in virgin snow, his last rays still lingered in tints of pink and grayish-blue. Snow-stars still sparkled like diamonds on the white prairie around them; but beautiful and weird though the whole scene was, there was a dreary lonesomeness about it that somehow seemed to clutch at our young heroes' very hearts, and kept them silent for a time.

There was a stillness, too, all around them that was most impressive. It was the silence almost of space itself, for to-night, high above the sea though they were, not a breath of wind was blowing, and they seemed to stand in the very centre of a world that was dead and buried.

Presently Olaf threw himself on the snow, and Colin followed his example. Both were tired, though neither complained. Before they had lain here long, Cæsar came trotting up, and with him little Keltie, the die-hard¹ terrier. Cæsar lay down beside Colin, and placed his great head across his master's chest. Keltie felt more inclined for a scamper, but for a time the Newfoundland could not be induced to play. So Keltie set himself to gnaw his gigantic friend's ears, and finally commenced to worry his shaggy tail. Cæsar bore this treatment patiently enough for a time; then he tossed his head and gave voice to a little impatient bark.

"O, bother!" he seemed to say, "I suppose I really must go for a run with the little varmint; he'll give me no peace till I do."

So off went the two friends together. As there was no chance of their losing themselves, neither Colin nor Olaf took any heed of their gambols and antics, for they had begun to talk about home, and the friends they had left in bonnie Scotland.

It was almost twilight—and the short night was now nearly all twilight—when back rushed Cæsar all by himself. He appeared to be quite overcome by grief and excite-

¹ The wiry-haired pricked-eared terriers of Scotland are so called, and right well are they named.

ment. He pulled and tugged at Colin's jacket, then the terrible truth flashed upon both Olaf and his friend at the same time.

"O, poor little Keltie!" cried Colin; "the crevasse!"

"The crevasse!—yes," said Olaf; "we shall never see Keltie again."

"Wowff, wowff!" barked Cæsar impatiently. Can nothing be done? The dog led the way far over the prairie of snow.

They had not come out without their safety ropes, which were tied to the waist of each, so that if one fell down a crevasse or crack in the snow-clad glacier, the other could support him and drag him up.

So while Colin stood well back, keeping the rope just taut, Olaf, being the lighter, crept on hands and knees toward the crevasse that Cæsar had led them to, and peered cautiously over into the terrible darkness far beneath.

He could see nothing. He listened after calling Keltie by name, but nothing could he hear.

Then he gathered himself up and retired.

"Dead! Poor Keltie!" That is all he said, and all he could say for the rising tears, and a lump in his throat that nearly choked him. Keltie was a favourite with everyone, and his untimely end cast a gloom over the camp that night, which nothing could dispel. Svolto's grief, however, was greater than that of anyone else. He seemed perfectly heart-broken, and took no pains to hide his tears. He had indeed lost a friend as well as a little bed-fellow.

But all retired to their bags at last.

As bears might follow the expedition, it was considered necessary to have sentries set. Joseph took watch till twelve, and then Colin came on. It might have been about one o'clock in the morning, and the sky was very clear and starry, when Colin took notice of a little black dot rapidly approaching the camp across the white field of snow.

The light that the stars gave, and the gleam of white from the glacier were somewhat puzzling, and for a time Colin could not make out whether that black spot was something very large at a distance, or something small close at hand.

Keltie himself soon solved the problem by jumping right up into the sentry's arms. Yes, it was he! But how had he escaped? That was a question to which Colin, for the time being, could frame no correct answer.

Meanwhile, he took the wee "die-hard" up in his arms, and fondled him for a time, then, still carrying him, he quietly entered the tent and groped about for a morsel of cheese and a crust of bread. Keltie, he thought, must be hungry after his strange adventure. Keltie was, and he greedily devoured all that was presented to him.

Then Colin went softly towards the bag where Svolto lay sleeping sound, with his back to Sigurd, and placed the doggie in his arms.

Olaf came to relieve his friend at four o'clock, and was told of Keltie's return. He was of course overjoyed

"What will Svolto say when he awakes?"

"Ah, that is the cream of the entertainment!" said Colin.
"We will see."

Then Colin turned in.

All hands were out of their bags by seven in the morning, except Svolto. The Lapp lad took quite a deal of rousing as a rule. Of course everybody was told the wonderful story of Keltie's resurrection, and Reynolds, thinking Colin was only joking, could not be convinced until he had peeped into Svolto's bag, and seen Keltie's saucy, little gray head for himself.

"Rouse out there, you lazy loon!" cried Reynolds.

The Lapp lad always obeyed the master's voice. He crept forth, Keltie wriggling out first. Then, indeed, that boy's face was a study. His eyes were as big as florins, and about the same shape and colour, his mouth as large as the hole in a letter-box. Then he laughed, guffawed rather, picked Keltie up and kissed him all along his back.

"Had such an awful dream!" he said. "But dreams come true sometimes. We must tie up Keltie. Keltie mustn't fall into an ice-crack again."

Once more nearly ready for the start, Colin soon discovered that Keltie's footsteps came from the north-east; that is, from the direction of the high ground on the right.

Now, the cracks or crevasses trended in that direction, thus crossing the line of march at right angles, and it was evident that the awful crevasse into which Keltie had fallen grew less and less deep as it neared the mountain, until finally it was so shallow that he could leap up. Instinct or reason had told the dog this.

Not only Keltie, but Cæsar also was now taken in a long leash, yet for days and days after this the little animal trembled visibly whenever he came near to a crevasse, while Cæsar went bounding over.

Before commencing the journey again after dinner, Reynolds spread the map before his people, and in pencil traced out thereon the probable line of march from the fjord, somewhat to the south of Cape Dan, straight away to Christianshaab or Disko Bay.

He drew the route as straight as he could, though there was very little chance, indeed, of their being able to follow so direct a course, even if they were not compelled to put back entirely from causes now unseen.

"At the very shortest, my friends," Reynolds said, "it will take us fully five-and-twenty days; but we have provisions for three months, so, God guiding us safely on, I think we need not despair."

As to provisions, they would live for several days on the cured seal meat and fish they had taken from the coast—gifts from their kindly friends the Eskimos. There was no danger of these going bad in the extreme cold of the high altitude they had already reached.

It was still early in the season, the time being the 21st of July. Ten days yet of this month to go, and all the month of August,—the middle of which Reynolds felt almost certain would find them safe and sound on the west coast somewhere, and at some semi-civilized place.

They were as tired the second evening as they had been the night before, and still more tired on the third, for their path still lay upwards. The crevasses were very frequent, and sometimes the surface of the glacier so uneven that it looked like a vast ocean of snow, wave succeeding wave at regular intervals.

At times, too, they came upon places where these terrible crevasses not only traversed the line of route, but ran in a contrary direction also.

Some parts of the country indeed, that is, some parts of this mighty glacier, looked as if they had been subjected to the force of an earthquake, or had been rent in all directions by suddenly giving way and slipping forward. The march, when places like these were encountered, was considerably delayed, for they found they could not pass, and had to return to seek farther north or farther south a more easy route.

In all directions the peaks of buried mountains peeped upwards over the dismal prairie of virgin snow, thus giving to the icescape a peculiar characteristic.

Reynolds, Colin, and Olaf kept each a diary. Well, it is hard work keeping up a book of this kind even at home, when you may write in a comfortable room, probably with your feet in warm slippers and your toes on the fender; it is twenty times harder to write up your log when you are high above the sea, on a vast plain of snow, your fingers half-frozen, your eyes clogged, perhaps, with ice, and mayhap drifting snow whirling round your head.

Reynolds thought of his wife when writing his, Colin of his aunt, and Olaf of his mother, and also of little Katie, and the pleasure he would have of reading it at the widow's fireside, with "my son John" at one side of the fire, Keltie and the collie on the rug, and Mrs. Jackson in the centre.

On, and on, and on they journeyed. Tired and weary often, and often foot-sore and shoulder-sore; but ever determined, ever full of hope. On the days when the snow was fairly smooth or less wavy, and its crust moderately hard, they made long and forced marches, especially if the crevasses were but few.

While Olaf kept the watch on their tenth night out he saw the new moon. He could not help calling Colin to see it also, for he had not yet turned in.

"Hurrah!" cried Colin; "what a lovely sight!"

That shout, of course, brought everybody out of the tent who had not as yet crept into his bag.

The new moon, however, brought with it a blizzard before morning. The temperature sank lower and lower. Joseph was fain to seek the shelter of the tent, for the snow was whirling over the prairie, and it was so dark it seemed the very darkness of death itself.

But morning broke gray and hazily over the scene at last, though it was evident at a glance there could be no march that day. Nor was there the next, nor the next, our heroes being almost completely snowed up.

Except to eat and drink they scarcely turned out at all. It was more comfortable in the bags. But the sky cleared at last, and the march was resumed. The snow, however, was soft and powdery, so much so that it was considered advisable to use the broad, round Canadian snow-shoe instead of the Norwegian *ski*.

This day was memorable for what at first was thought would prove a terrible and fatal accident. Olaf fell through a snow bridge and disappeared deep down into the crevasse beneath.

Poor Cæsar howled with fear, even Keltie trembled. Colin was at the other end of the rope, for they were tied together. At first his heart sank with dread, for it fell as light as one's fishing line does, when a monster trout has just escaped, bait or fly and all. It had evidently broken, so thought Colin. But Joseph and Sigurd quickly rounded in the slack of it, and hauled away, singing, as if they were pulling the braces on board ship. And presently, to the intense delight of everybody, Cæsar included, they landed their fish—that is, they hauled poor Olaf to bank.

"Augustus Cæsar!" he exclaimed, patting the Newfoundland; "I don't think I ever got such a fright before in my life. All my past existence seemed to pass in swift panorama before my eyes, especially, Colin, the wicked portions of it; and oh!—well, it doesn't matter now. Here we are, Keltie; I shouldn't have liked to have passed a night down there, though, not for a good deal."

This, I may as well state, was not the only accident of the kind that occurred during this marvellous march across the continent. Sigurd had the same terrible experience; so, too,

had Reynolds himself, and was very nearly dead when brought to bank.

Even at this high altitude the weather was changeable, and there were times when it actually rained. At other times the hail fell with such force, and in pieces so large, that it was painful to stand against it.

One curious experience they had was that of a thunder-storm by night. While snow fell thick and fast, the lightning was extremely vivid, the thunder awful; it seemed, indeed, as if the great glacier was being rent into myriads of pieces, while Olaf observed that the glimmering and incessant flashes lit up the "skyful of snow-flakes with a 'romance-someness' that was wonderful to witness". That is the English in which Olaf described the scene.

Nobody had been able to sleep through that storm. It passed away at last, however, and once more deep silence reigned over the great white prairie. As, however, it would be far easier to go for a longer time in these regions without food than without sleep, everyone was pleased when, as he snuggled down once more into his bag, Reynolds made the remark that they could all have an extra hour in the morning.

It snowed and drifted all night long, for the wind had risen somewhat, and certainly things did not look over pleasant.

Nor was it a very agreeable sensation for our heroes next day to peep drowsily out of their bags, like sparrows looking out of their nests, and find everything buried in the snow, that had sifted into the tent through every cranny and crevice.

Well, there was no good lying and looking at things in this sleepy position, so, bringing their courage to the front, they scrambled out and donned the garments they had taken off. It may be stated that they only divested themselves of their outer garments, and these as a rule were folded up and used instead of pillows.

The journey this day was a more difficult one than any they had yet faced. Note, reader, that though they were now very far away from the sea, and fully 5000 feet above the

ocean-level, the snow-field was still on the rise, and the surfaces extremely uneven, while, although crevasses were not so numerous, they occurred when least expected, and some looked very deep and very awful.

Cæsar used still to go bounding over these, but Keltie, remembering his terrible experience, sometimes could not, or would not cross, and had to be placed in a sledge and dragged over.

On, and on, and on! No going back now. The western sea was far ahead; but that, and that alone, must be their goal.

CHAPTER X.

STARTLING ADVENTURES—THE BLIZZARD—REYNOLDS SPEAKS OF CROSSING THE POLE.

THE western sea? Yes, that great stretch of dark, iceberg-studded water, that has been the stage for so many tragedies in real life, and the scene of so much real heroism, long even before America or Britain sent out its greatest expeditions. For, while reading and thinking about the brave doings and sufferings of those of our explorers who have penetrated farthest to the north, we forget entirely the heroism of our honest, though humble, whale-fishers, who never wrote books about their travels, but who were in the habit of sailing away from Aberdeen or Peterhead in the end of the summer, and lying high up north on the western shores of Greenland through all the darkness and dreariness of a Polar winter, in order to be first in at the death of whales in the early spring.

Their ships were strong, but otherwise the roughest of the rough; their board was frugal, and of comforts they had but few, such as tobacco, tea, and coffee. But the Vikings of old were not more plucky and undaunted than those whaler seamen.

When those bold mariners of the frozen north returned

home, their ships with every morsel of paint scratched off the hull, with rent and riven sails perhaps, and often with jury-masts, their owners met them with smiles and feted and feasted the captain—if he had been successful. If not, they had only sour looks and lowered brows to welcome him withal. Never mind, our Arctic whalers had sweethearts, mothers, wives, and sisters; so there was always a real welcome for them that the shipowners could not forbid.

After a few more days of hauling our wanderers found themselves at their highest altitude, about 9000 feet above the sea-level. As the snow-fields to the northward and west were now level as far as they could see, they tried an experiment of hoisting rude sails to assist the sledges over the snow. These succeeded beyond their utmost expectation, for the wind was fair. The wind was also uncomfortably high, but I suppose that at the dreary altitude they had now reached the wind is nearly always blowing more or less.

One day, with the help of those improvised sails, they managed to do perhaps the longest journey they had yet recorded.

The great snow prairie continued level, but there were mountain summits seen away in the far north, and here and there rising from the ice plain peaks or "nunataks". Except for those there was nothing at sunset to break the terrible monotony of the scene.

The land, if I dare call it land, was somewhat on the down-grade next day, but the wind veered more round to the north, and increased in force till it blew almost a gale. At the same time banks of white rock-like clouds that had suddenly appeared above the distant mountain peaks advanced higher and higher. They came on, indeed, with whirlwind speed, and it was soon evident that a more fearful snowstorm than any they had yet encountered was rapidly approaching.

Luckily a rock was near, and to the lee side of this they quickly hurried.

"What a blessing it is," said Reynolds laughing, "to reach a good hotel before the storm comes on."

"The shadow of a great rock in a weary land," said Joseph, quoting Scripture.

"Amen!" said Rudland; "but look, Captain Reynolds, if we throw up an embankment at both sides of us, and place the tent in the centre, we will be as comfortable as if we were in good old Uncle M'Ivor's tartan parlour."

"Well thought!" cried Reynolds. "Come, boys, bear a hand. The storm is coming."

In a very short time the embankment was thrown up and the tent rigged.

"We haven't done a bad day's work after all," said Reynolds.

"No," said Joseph; "and we couldn't have gone very much further, for it is near sunset."

"Ha! Joe; I know what you mean. You are hungry."

"Wowff!" barked Cæsar.

"Wiff! wiff!" added Keltie as usual.

"Thank Heaven!" said Reynolds, "there is corn in Egypt."

"Now, Colin, bustle about. Get the cooker out, Olaf. We shall have soup to-night, and biscuit and meat and all things nice. And, Cæsar and Keltie, there is plenty of frozen seal still left. So let us all be jolly."

But the storm came on before they had quite finished dinner. The snow fell thick and fast, but was caught up even before it reached the ice and ground by that fierce and terrible wind into the finest of ice dust which filled the air everywhere, sifted in through the crevices in the tent like smoke, and almost suffocated the inmates.

Jolly, indeed? Well, it needed all their courage and philosophy to be anything like jolly in a night of snow-tempest like this. The temperature had gone down, down, down, I do not know how many degrees below zero. Out on the ice no one could have lived for an hour.

Additional tarpaulins were put up to keep out the sifting snow, but I fear these availed but little. There was no comfort in sitting up, so at Joseph's suggestion everyone took refuge in the bed-bags. But so intense was the cold even here that they shivered for hours.

It was indeed a bitter, bitter night. Then the dreary moaning and sometimes shrieking of the snow-wind across and round the tent was dreary in the extreme.

The storm seemed to increase rather than otherwise towards midnight, and at times it appeared as if the tent itself would be rent in pieces or lifted and blown away, leaving the wanderers to the mercy of the pitiless storm.

"Boys," said Reynolds, "are you all asleep?"

There was an answering chorus of "No"; even Keltie said "Wiff", which meant that he was all alive, and fit for anything.

"Boys, I move that somebody gets up and makes coffee. Whose watch is it?"

"Mine," said Joseph. "I'm keeping it in my bag."

But Joe got up and lit the spirits of wine. The water was frozen, so it took fully twenty minutes to heat. Joe meanwhile got the biscuits out, and spread them thickly with butter—of which, by good luck, they had brought a large supply, for in Greenland one longs for fat with a passionate longing unknown to people farther south. Then he found the cheese—a fat old one it was—and on each biscuit he placed a good slice. Joe was ankle-deep in powdery snow all this time, and the drift was at times like smoke, so that he gasped and almost choked.

What a delightful supper that was, however, and how every one did enjoy it, to be sure! And what is more, every one slept after this, even Joe—who was keeping his watch in the bag.

In the morning it was still pitch dark when it should have been light. The wind, however, had gone down.

"Is it still night?" said Reynolds. "I feel capitally rested."

"So do I," said Colin, striking a wax vesta to look at his watch.

"Why, Captain Reynolds, it is ten o'clock!"

"Then we're snowed up. That's all."

This was true. They were snowed up, but not to any great depth, for Cæsar and Keltie set to work with a will, and very soon let the daylight in.

That day the *skier* were no good, so it was a weary drag with Canadian snow-shoes on. But the sun was very bright, and before evening the snow had become soft and packed somewhat; then at night, which was bright and clear, with a soft moon shining, the frost hardened the surface, so that next day's march was quite a picnic. Everybody was as happy as the traditional sand-boy, or the black man in an empty sugar cask, or a school-boy going home for the holidays.

For several days not only the weather, but the ice-field or great snow-prairie, was everything that could be desired, and the progress made was very satisfactory indeed.

Then high winds began again, and falling, drifting snow. The wind had a habit of getting up without giving much warning. As it was very awkward to be caught in a storm at night, Reynolds managed to end the day's journey in a place as sheltered as possible, and to spend some time in throwing up a protecting embankment of snow. Then the tent was erected, and dinner cooked at once. Thus cosily ensconced, to quote Burns:

“The storm without might rair and rustle,
They didna mind the storm a whistle.”

I have said “cosily ensconced”. Well, as a rule, there wasn't much cosiness about it. To tell the truth, the only real comfort our heroes had, apart from eating dinner—and that was not a very enticing meal—was cuddling up in their sleeping-bags. The comfort of a sleeping-bag in the Arctic regions cannot be over-estimated.

But they really got a good deal of enjoyment out of the new plan of sailing the sledges. I need hardly say new, for it had been known in Canada for many years, and in a rougher kind of way my brothers and I used, when boys, to enjoy the sport among our native hills.

The farther north and west our heroes got, the more difficult did the road become. It was now to a great extent down-hill, for the country was now mountainous, the snow often treacherous in the extreme, and the descent of some



of the slopes was so dangerous with the sledges behind them, that they positively took their lives in their hands when the attempt was made.

In a hilly and snow-covered country like this, it was necessary to send one of the party on in front for the purpose of prospecting and finding out the best and safest route. This was a duty that usually devolved on Olaf, or rather, it was one which he cheerfully proposed to undertake. He did not go quite alone, however. No; Cæsar would not hear of this. And, of course, Keltie accompanied Cæsar; so they were a trio.

Olaf's duty was one not unattended with danger, and, to tell the truth, the young fellow was just a trifle rash at times, and did not always look before him. This fault of his led once to his falling over a ledge of rock. Luckily the snow was deep and soft below, else the consequences might have been very serious indeed.

Another time, when—luckily again, the sledges were not far behind him—Reynolds heard Cæsar howling most dismally, and Keltie keeping up a dreary minor. With Joseph and Sigurd he rushed forward to find that poor Olaf had *skilöbned* into a narrow crevasse. His bamboo pole, from ledge to ledge, alone supported him, and saved him from an awful doom. I think that Olaf was a little more careful after this.

I am not going to make any attempt to describe the savageness of the mountain scenery that the little expedition at last found around them on every hand. Take the wildest parts of our Scottish Highlands of Glencoe and the mountain lands of Sutherland around the dark lochs, throw in Glen Coruisk and Quiraing itself, in Skye, imagine all this wildery to be covered with ice and snow, and every boulder of stone a block like glass, covered on one side with snow; imagine the dreary glens between these mountains to be studded with these blocks of ice, as if mighty giants had been fighting for supremacy, and then you have but a faint notion of some of the difficulties that our heroes had to encounter.

On to the western sea. There was now no going back.

There could be none. If the difficulties and dangers became at last unsurmountable, they would have to die in the solitude of this awful wilderness.

And every one seemed to know and to feel this. Yet the dangers, the difficulties, the toilsomeness of the journey but nerved their hearts and steeled their limbs. Whatever a man dares he can do.

But when the ice improved, when the surface of the valleys and glens became smoother, when the wind blew less piercingly, then at eventide, in their bags, it was wonderful how gay and even jolly every one appeared to be. Those who smoked were then allowed to smoke; those who could tell a good story, or even a racy anecdote, told it.

But Sigurd, it must be allowed, was *the* tale-teller of the expedition. His English might not have been the very best, and he may have introduced many words that really could not be called English or even good broad Scotch, still his narratives were none the less graphic.

It was the weird legends of the land of the Norseman that both Colin and Olaf delighted most to listen to, and the folk-lore of Sigurd's native land, of the little spirit-men that dwell among the mountains, in the morasses or bogs, and in the forests, and who bear nought but ill-will to human beings; of the good fairies, who, on the contrary, love mankind, and at odd times appear to the peasant or the peasant's wife in their humble log hut, and always bring them luck; and of the fearful fiends who live in the deepest pools of lonesome lakes or tarns, which, if they leave by night, it is only to work woe and destruction in some thriving village, or to lure some lonely and belated traveller to a frightful doom.

"Boys," said Reynolds one evening on which they had retired early, for even then the western sky was all aglow with the beams of the sun, "boys, in a few more days we will have accomplished our task, and shall be eating fried fresh fish—fried in oil, mind you—in Christiansaab."

"Hurrah!" cried Colin.

"Won't I have a blow-out!" said Olaf.

"I don't know exactly what will happen to us after that," continued Reynolds.

"Trust in chance," said Rudland. "Captain, I'm going to have another pipe."

"Well, smoke. I shall talk."

"We all shall listen," said Joe. "It is rather a rare thing, sir, to hear you talking for any great length of time at a spell. So, heave round, doctor, I'll join you in a pipe."

"Well," said Reynolds, "I've been thinking."

"Something I never do," said Rudland.

"A good thing for your patients you don't," laughed Colin.

"Go on, captain, please."

"Yes, heave round, sir."

"Well, it isn't only recently, you know, that I have taken the notion into my head that I am now going to tell you of. O, no, for often enough I have lain awake in the tent high up on the snow-fields yonder while you were all asleep, and, pardon me, snoring like frogs. I have lain awake to think, and I have come to the conclusion, that there is only one way of finding out the North Pole, and of ever crossing it."

"What!" cried Joseph, "you're not going to take us there, sir?"

"Not this cruise, Joe. But at a future time, if all of you here care to accompany me, I will be very glad to have you."

"And we will go anywhere with you, sir."

"Hear, hear!" cried Olaf and Colin.

"We have been very happy together all through this dreary journey, haven't we, Joe?"

"There's never been an angry word, sir," said Joe. "I'm sure we have been perfectly happy, in spite of all our toils and trials and dangers."

"And we are all safe and sound," said Colin.

"Thank God for that," said Reynolds fervently. "We have trusted Him. Our prayers found their way to the throne of grace."

"Ay, ay, sir. The great Captain was ever near us in storm and tempest. His name be praised!"

Reynolds paused for a moment.

"Boys," he continued, "as you know, because I have told you, and Joseph has told you, my experience of the Polar regions, and Polar ice, and the Arctic currents of the ocean is not inconsiderable. It is true that I have never occupied the exalted position of a great explorer. Nor has my old friend Joseph."

"We have just been blubber-hunters, boys; that's the short and the long of it," said Joe.

"Well, anyhow, Joe and I have been many times and oft frozen up in the dreary regions round Jan Mayen, and even in the neighbourhood of Spitzbergen, and we have noticed, and we have watched the lay and the send of the currents and the drift of the ice. Haven't we, Joe?"

"We studied them very hard, sir. By gum! sir, we had to. Hadn't we to fight against them; and if we hadn't done so, it's a poor voyage we'd have had, and only sour looks when we got back to Peterhead or Fraserburgh."

"Well, boys, I want you to explain this, for even you, Colin, can, I think. One year when Joe and I were beset near to the shores of Spitzbergen for a very long time—"

"We never expected to get out again, did we, sir?"

"No, Joseph. But we did all we could to cheer up the men all through that dark and dreary winter. We even built a snow-house with a fireplace."

"Didn't the fire melt the ice, sir?"

"The fire was built against the rock, Olaf, but our igloo, mind you, was partly wood. Wood, boys, you'll take note, that never waved green on the rocky hills of Spitzbergen, for when wood grew there, lads, this world was younger far than it is to-day.

"Well, where did the wood come from? It was comparatively recent, you will remember. It was not fossil wood, it was wood that could float and drift, and it came from the pine-clad shores of distant Siberia. Yes, and that wood doesn't all land on these shores, boys; it is taken with the ice far away to the eastern shores of North Greenland itself.

"How does it get there, think you, boys? It is taken there regularly, mind you. It is drifted on a current, and that current must be a regular one. Boys, it is my firm belief that that current goes sweeping over the very pole itself. And, Joseph, my idea is that if in a strong ship, well provisioned for years, we should take the ice to the nor'ard and east, in course of time we would ourselves, ship and all, be drifted across the pole.

"I'll say no more to-night, lads. Think of it; and if any of you are afraid to venture with me on this exploration, which, if fortune favours me, I mean to make, he can stay at home. But, like me, you must think it out," he added.

"That we will, sir," said Joseph; "but to tell you the truth, sir, the scheme seems to me, at first blush, to be somewhat—somewhat—a—a—"

"Utopian, Joseph?"

"The very word, sir, I was trying to harpoon."

"Well, Joe, I have only broken the ice, and I am glad that I have told you, boys, about my idea before breathing a word to anyone else. Think it out. I myself have already done so."

The conversation now drifted into another channel. Colin began to talk of home.

"Do you remember, Olaf," he said, "the first days of our acquaintance?"

"Ah," replied Olaf, "I am never likely to forget anything that happened then, nor the pretty little cottage in Constitution Street, nor kindly widow Jackson with 'my son John', Captain Junk, and—and pretty little Katie. Shouldn't I like to know what they are all doing now?"

"So should I," said Colin. "I wouldn't mind popping into Auntie Dewar's either, and surprising her as I used to do."

And thus they rattled on, talking for hours of—

"Home, home, sweet, sweet home",

Then they slept. For the next best thing to talking of home is—

"To dream of home".

CHAPTER XI.

“WE WILL STAND OR FALL TOGETHER”—THE WESTERN SEA—“SO GOD BROUGHT YOU BACK”.

NOW that he had broken the ice, as he phrased it, or brought the subject that had long been uppermost in his thoughts before his companions, Reynolds was never tired talking about it, and laughingly introduced it whenever there was the slightest chance. And at those best of hours of all the day, just after they had got inside the sleeping-bags and lay warmly snuggled up, enjoying rest, comfort, and conversation, he did not fail to lead round to it.

Indeed, our brave Captain Reynolds was highly pleased that his scheme had not met with greater opposition. Joe, he knew, was a bit of a cynic; Reynolds rather dreaded his satire. But perhaps he dreaded more the silence of Sigurd. Had this man, who knew so much about Greenland and the far, far north, shaken his head and said nothing, the captain would have been disheartened. But, on the contrary, Sigurd was willing enough to discuss the plan in all its bearings, and he even added suggestions, good ones too, that probably Reynolds himself would never have thought of.

Then this enterprising navigator and explorer felt happy. He looked round to Joseph with beaming eyes, for when Sigurd was talking, as a rule Joe said nothing, or very little. He liked to listen to Sigurd. The man took time to speak, it is true, but what he did say was always to the point.

On the evening of one very toilsome day's march, when within about two days' journey of Disko Bay, Reynolds called the halt for the night very much earlier than usual.

“We're all tired this evening,” he said, “and, being so near to comparative civilization, I think we may make ourselves as cosy as we know how to. What say you to tea in advance?”

“Splendid!” cried Colin, blowing on his fingers, for the day was somewhat cold, though the sky was free from snow and the wind anything but high.

They had chosen a very well sheltered place to pitch the tent; and while Olaf and Colin were getting ready the tea, Reynolds spread his map of the polar regions out before Sigurd and Joseph.

“I have told you,” he said, “all about the currents, and why I believe that such currents do really exist. You think I am right concerning the existence of such currents, do you not, Sigurd?”

Sigurd looked at the hills for a moment or two, as if he sought the answer he ought to give from their highest peaks.

“Ye—es,” he said. “I think that the argument of the drifting wood is incapable of refutation.”

That was the gist of Sigurd’s answer, the words were more simple.

“And yet,” said Reynolds, “there are men in England, and in your country too, Sigurd, who try to explain things in quite a different way. They tell us, for instance, that the drift-wood, the floes themselves even, may be carried across the sea by the wind about once only in a hundred years.”

“Nonsense!” This from Sigurd emphatically.

“Thank you for that word, Sigurd. In you I have a firm ally.”

“And in me,” said Joe. “O, bother it all, Captain! though I don’t say much, I think all the more; and you don’t go anywhere without old Joe.”

“Captain Reynolds,” said Rudland Syme, “I have not said much one way or another, but, like Joe, I have been thinking freely. I have been considering your scheme and plans, and I have been considering you. I have been considering, too, what a celebrated Edinburgh physician said to me before I left in Daybreak’s yacht. ‘You have,’ he said, ‘a very pretty case of monomania on board.’”

“And the monomaniac was I?” said Reynolds, laughing heartily.

“You were the monomaniac; and, indeed, I half thought at the time that this good surgeon, his opinion being backed by so many scientific men, might be right. But now I find

he is wrong. The crossing of the Greenland continent is a *fait accompli*, and there is nothing so successful as success."

"And you don't now consider me a monomaniac?"

"Quite the contrary, sir; and I am willing and ready to follow you into the uttermost regions of the earth."

"So am I," said Colin.

"And I," said Olaf.

Svolto stole up with Keltie in his arms, and slipped his big and somewhat ungainly hand into that of Sigurd.

"Why," cried Reynolds, springing up from the edge of the sledge in which he had been sitting, "I've got you all."

"Wowff!" barked big Caesar.

"Boys," cried Reynolds, "or rather men, let me shake hands with you all round. This is a compact. We will stand or fall together. Through good report or evil report we will be as one."

"Hip, hip, hip, hoor——ay!" This was from Colin, but it was a cheer in which all joined right heartily, a cheer that was re-echoed back from the very ice-cliffs themselves, not once, but a dozen times.

"Wowff!" barked the great dog again. I suppose he didn't know what was up, but only that there was excitement of some kind on hand, so he started off in a wide circle through the snow with Keltie at his heels, by way of relieving his feelings.

"And now, Colin, is tea ready?"

"That it is, and I know we shall enjoy it. Fancy, Olaf, only two days' journey to Disko Bay."

The country all round Disko Bay, and the tiny village thereon, is very beautiful in summer. Indeed, I may tell you that it is lovely at any time when the sun shines, and even in the moonlight.

But now summer had almost gone. The days were already drawing in, the nights were cold, even by the water side.

Greenland men, I mean men who sail year after year to Davis Straits or Baffin's Bay to prosecute the whale fishing, look upon Disko, far north though it be, as quite near at home. If, however, the reader takes a glance at the map he

will hardly, I think, be likely to endorse the opinion of these brave mariners.

I know of no situation that is more intensely or pleasantly exciting than that of reaching at last one's promised goal after months or even weeks of danger and toil, be it upon the dark blue sea or in a land that has been hitherto unknown to us.

I cannot, however, undertake to describe the feelings of our heroes when they stood at last on the brink of a great glacier, just as the sun was sinking in the west behind the rugged island of Disko.

And any attempt of mine to describe the scenery itself would be equally vain. Not that it was magnificent, wide and wild though it was; there was a coldness and dreariness about it which at any other time or under other circumstances might have been felt by our heroes, but certainly was not now. They had come from regions so savage, so inhospitable, that the country beneath them seemed heavenly in comparison, and those clouds so radiant in crimson and gold, in bronze and gray, appeared but to reflect the joy that was in every heart.

And summer was surely lingering down yonder still. Was there not a profusion of wild flowers still in bloom? Did not the softest and greenest of moss still cover the bonnie hillsides? Here and there lingered patches of snow in hollows near to the cliffs, but these detracted not at all from the beauty of the scene itself, any more than did the snow-white pieces of ice or strange fantastic bergs afloat in the ocean detract from the irresistible charm of the dark, deep-blue sea on which they floated. There were streamlets, too, trickling down from the glaciers, and yonder a rivulet which, after dashing over a cliff and forming a cataract, the smoke or spray of which could be seen from the spot where these weary wanderers stood, and the sound of which fell on their ears like the murmur of far-off music, glided away, and was lost to view.

But there was something else in the bay yonder that riveted their attention far more than anything. It was a ship.

The gloaming shadows were creeping down from the hills or up from the sea, so that even with the aid of their lorgnettes it was not possible to make out the nationality of the vessel, far less her name.

"One other night on the ice, boys; one other night," said Reynolds. "And now for supper. It would be a pity to permit even joy to spoil our appetite."

What a happy welcome our heroes received at this little Danish settlement! Everybody in the village turned out to greet them, though the whole population barely numbered one hundred and fifty souls, the large majority of whom were Eskimos, or half-castes.

But a happier welcome than even this awaited them, and a joyful surprise indeed was theirs when a boat landed on the beach. Why, here was Lord Daybreak himself!

I must leave the reader to imagine what that meeting was like. The situation is far too strong for my poor pen.

"Well," said Daybreak laughing, "the fact is, we bore up for home after you left us, but we encountered a gale of wind which blew right in our teeth. So we changed our minds, I and my sailing master, and we changed our course at the same time. We made a beam wind of it, you see. And why shouldn't we change our minds? We had taken you out, I told my captain, and it was but fair to take you back."

"Ten thousand thanks!" said Reynolds.

"Ten thousand fiddlesticks!" said his lordship. "But we really are delighted to see you. We saw you last night on the ice-cap; but if I must tell you all the truth, Reynolds, we did not expect, at the time you left us, ever to clap eyes upon you in this world again."

"What will the clever, but somewhat abusive, *savants* say now?" he added gleefully. "And here is poor Cæsar. Hasn't forgotten me? Nor Keltie either? Well, well, to be sure this is a happy meeting!"

"Cæsar, you old rogue!" cried Colin.

The fact is Cæsar had not only licked his lordship's ear by way of recognition, but had deftly snatched off his ever-

lasting cap of fur, and was now tearing round and round with it, Keltie as usual at his heels.

The Inspector's house to which all were invited looked quite like a palace, and the dinner set before our heroes was a feast, a banquet fit to place before a king.

The only drawback to perfect happiness and enjoyment was the mosquitoes.

“We are used to them,” laughed the Inspector. They don't bother us now. But they know you are strangers, and are rejoiced to get a taste of fresh blood.”

Yes, summer was at an end, and winter itself might now come soon and sudden, so that, for fear the *Aurora* might get beset in the ice while going southwards, a start was made just two days after the arrival of the expedition in Disko Bay.

They called at Godshaavn, on the island. Then, with a fair wind and an open ice-way, in due time the bonnie yacht reached the blue water.

Then it was eastward ho! across the Atlantic. Everything favoured the mariners—even our heroes were mariners now once more—and the voyage was a delightful one.

When they arrived in Aberdeen once more, safe and sound and well, the fame of the expedition speedily got noised abroad, and *savants* from all parts of the country flocked in to hear the marvellous news, and give them a hearty welcome. But the first night was a special night on board the *Aurora*. No *savants* were admitted into the saloon that evening.

The arrival of the *Aurora* off Wick had been telegraphed to Aberdeen, and I need hardly say that the nearest and dearest were all waiting in the Granite City to receive them.

Uncle Tom—bold Captain Junk—never looked jollier, nor Miss Dewar happier and healthier; while Laird M'Ivor had come all the way down from the Highlands to greet the wanderers' return, and he looked as radiant and rosy as a full moon orient.

Next forenoon, in company with Colin and the dogs, Olaf set out for the humble little cottage in Constitution Street.

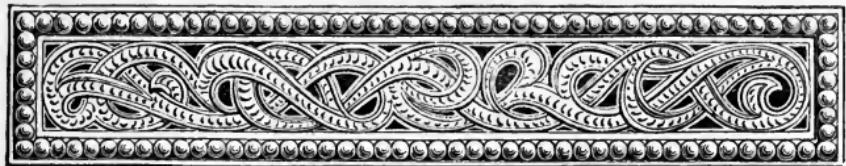
Little Katie fairly rushed into Olaf's arms, crying one moment, and laughing through her tears the next.

"But, of course," she said, "I knew you would come back."

"How did you know, dear?" asked Olaf.

"O, you know, I prayed for you; every night too. O yes, every night. So God brought you back."





BOOK III. AT THE NORTH POLE.

CHAPTER I.

FITTING OUT FOR THE POLE—THE “FEAR NOT”.

IF you ask the average Briton a question, either historical or geographical, he will very likely answer you off-hand, in that happy-go-lucky, hit-or-miss sort of manner, which is so characteristic of honest John Bull.

His ignorance of even comparatively modern history does not interfere with his appetite in the least. The absence from his mind or memory of anything like a correct idea of geography, or the lay of the land, never keeps him awake at night.

When at school he had to study the maps, perhaps even the globes, and to this day he is quite certain there are such things as parallels of latitude and lines of longitude, and he has even heard of the meridian which passes through Greenwich; but he may tell you he never saw it, though he has been there. The Cape of Good Hope lies south of us, Australia under our feet, and Spitzbergen is away up in the icy north, mostly all other places are abroad somewhere. If this answer doesn't suit you, you may go to *Bradshaw*, or *Baedeker*, or elsewhere.

He learned dates at school, too, and kings and queens, and battles, especially Waterloo, which is more than merely a London railway station.

“But,” I’ve heard him say, “who did reign before Queen

Victoria? whom did she succeed? was it a George or one of the Williams? Strange, I should forget; but, there—never mind!"

Or—"Who was Charles the Pretender? wasn't he a son of George II., or was he some distant relation of the Duke of Cumberland? O well, what does it matter! Pass the walnuts."

Now, boys, if you ask your own bosom friend in what direction Edinburgh or Newcastle lies from London, he will very likely tell you—"O, due north".

But it does nothing of the sort; and if you will come with me for a minute in a voyage of the mind, I will take you along the meridian from London right away to the North Pole, at a far greater rate of speed than that at which our hero Reynolds is likely to get there, if ever he gets there at all.

Well, we leave Greenwich, and off we go. The meridian line takes us pretty close to Cambridge, and to Lincoln also, and though we may get a peep at Scarborough, it will be but a peep, for the line lands us in the sea at Flamborough Head. We don't get wet, because this is merely a voyage of the mind; so northwards still we float.

We do not go anywhere near Newcastle, we are farther still from Edinburgh and Aberdeen; we do not touch at the Orkney Islands even, and we get but a very hazy glance at Shetland. Then we are out and away in the lonesome and wild North Sea. When we reach the Arctic circle we are about midway between Iceland and the surf-beaten rocks on the Norwegian shore, but many hundreds of miles from either. Continuing our journey due north we gain the latitude of the Isle of Jan Mayen, in 71° N., but so far away is it on our port beam, that though the summit of its lofty cone-shaped mountain rises far into the blue sky, we catch not a glimpse of it; and 'twixt 76° and 80° N. latitude, the mainland of Spitzbergen, with all its rank and file of rocky ice-girt isles around it, is left ten degrees to the east of us. We are almost in an unknown sea now. It is the sea of ice—the great sea of palaeocrystic ice. But we do not care, because we are sailing through the sky just

now—on, and on, and on, the degrees of longitude getting less and less in length—the east drawing nearer and nearer to the west—till they meet in the centre, and lo! we have reached the pole.

Here we stand, you and I, reader; the heavens above us, the whole earth beneath our feet. No more east, no more west, no more north! Is it not wonderful? Point in which ever direction you have a mind to, and you are pointing south. You cannot make any mistake in your geography now. At home, in merrie England, we talk of America as lying to the west and India to the east of us. But at the pole, here, it is different; America lies south, and England lies south, and so does India itself, and every other place.

Now, take a glance at your map, please.

But our friend Reynolds had no intention of trying to reach the North Pole by sailing or flying along the meridian line as you and I have done. His plans, however, were all thought out, well considered, and arranged before he even thought of building the ship that he believed would carry him there, and that he hoped would bring him safely home again, after years, mayhap, spent in the most dismal regions of the north.

Reynolds lectured here, there, and everywhere; Reynolds talked at dinners, and suppers, and conversaziones; Reynolds wrote in the dailies and magazines of worth; but Reynolds told Joe and Captain Junk, with whom he was wont to dine or sup in a quiet way, that he might lecture, talk, or write till he was blinder than a bodkin—which has only one eye, you know—without getting people to believe that his idea of drifting across the Polar regions with the Arctic current was anything else save the phantom of a mind diseased.

So long as Reynolds wrote about his adventures in Greenland, or lectured thereon, everybody was willing to read him or to listen to him, but when he got on to the North Pole, as they phrased it, men-folks nodded or shook their heads, and old ladies sighed.

O, yes; I do not say that he had not many good and true friends, who, although they told him to his face that his

attempt at crossing the pole would be dangerous and risky in the extreme, made no actual attempt to dissuade him therefrom.

Reynolds and our other heroes laughed at the idea of danger and foolhardiness and all the rest of it.

"You may take the ice, as you purpose," said one well-intentioned *savant*, "but even if you get into this current, which, pardon me, I believe has no existence except in your brain, are you at all certain whither it will take you?"

"Not at all," said Reynolds smiling.

"It may carry you against unknown lands in the very far north."

"Very probably."

"And deposit you there like a bundle of firewood till you starve to death."

"I shall be provisioned for six years; so, I guess that in that time I and my brave fellows would manage somehow to wriggle southwards. But," added Reynolds, "long before we can get into any of the terrible dangers that you and others speak about, we shall discover whether or not there appears to be a current sufficiently strong to carry us onwards."

"And, if not?"

"Why, then we shall return. We shall have failed, and we will boldly own up to it."

But the best friend that Reynolds had was Lord Day-break. He was the friend in need, and without his kindly aid, I doubt very much whether our great Arctic hero would have been able to build his sturdy barque.

The good yacht *Aurora* had reached Aberdeen late in September. The keel of Reynolds's barque, in which he hoped to cross the pole or perish in the attempt, was laid early in November, and from that time till late in the summer that followed the clang of hammers in, on, and around her was deafening, incessant.

She was completed and launched and baptized in September, just within the year from the day her keel was placed on the stocks.

"Captain Reynolds," said Olaf, about a month before the barque was sent off the slips, "have you arranged with any great gun of a lady to baptize and name our bonnie ship?"

"Haven't thought of it, Olaf."

"No duchess or great lady of title?"

"To tell you the truth, Olaf, I'm not over-fond of empty titles. But why do you ask?"

"Because I have a little sweetheart—that's my fun!—but she is a sweetly pretty wee maiden of some thirteen summers, and, sir, she saved my life, or nursed me back to life—"

"Olaf, my lad, don't say another word; your Katie Jackson will do."

"More of his madness!" said the dowager Lady Grumps, who thought that her daughter, an angular, but titled spinster of thirty summers—and winters—ought to have had the honour of naming the barque. "More of his madness! A chit of a child to name the ship; a child, too, that no one ever heard of. Well, never mind!"

Katie Jackson was dressed in white, with a pink rose in her bonnie dark hair, and everybody—bar the dowager—complimented her, while some elderly gentlemen kissed her.

The day on which the *Fear Not* took the water was a very lovely one, and she slipped away without a hitch, amidst the cheering of tens of thousands of people. Indeed, the whole of Aberdeen seemed to have turned out for the occasion, and to have brought his wife and daughters down as well.

Now, I have told you what Reynolds did not, and could not, do, in order to reach the Pole, because he had no wings. Now, let the hero himself speak of his intentions.

The walnuts and wine were on the table, around which sat jolly Captain Junk, Lord Daybreak, Joseph, Olaf, and Colin; Sigurd had gone home, and Rudland was from home. Charts and maps were spread out between Reynolds, Daybreak, and Captain Junk.

"Look here, Captain Jones, we shall leave this harbour early in June next, and bear up for the north and the east. Indeed, it will be pretty near north all the way, till we reach a latitude of about 68° , when we will bear away for the Barent's Sea, that washes the shores of Nova Zembla.

A vessel meets me at the island of Waigatz, which, a glance at the map will show you, lies to the south'ard and east of Nova Zembla. This ship brings me coals—the last I shall have. Then I shall steer east once more, as well and as easily as the ice, if there be much, will let me. At the Straits of Yugor I hope to meet a trusty fellow—a Siberian—with dogs. His name is Lakoff.

“On, then, through the Kara Sea, till we double Cape Chalyuskin. Here it is on the map, Captain Jones. Eastward still, if the water is open, to Lena Delta, and at the mouth of a river about here I shall stay to take in more dogs.

“My kind friend, Lord Daybreak, has offered to go before and to meet me there with these dogs, and starts almost at once. His adventures will be worth relating during the long, dark Arctic night. Yes, he is coming with us.”

“Well, go on,” said Uncle Tom, rubbing his hands.

“That is nearly all, Captain Jones. We will bear up for the New Siberian Islands. We will probably work to the east of them, then head for the Pole. We will get fast in the ice now, and then—”

“Then float, or be floated?”

“That is it.”

“Well, it seems to me that you take the ice at the back of the north wind. Right at the other side of the Pole from here.”

“That's just what I hope to do,” said Reynolds laughing.

Yes, reader, that was just it. And—now glance at the map once more, please—if you and I had continued straight on across the Pole, to which we travelled by the meridian line, and without tickets, we should have eventually come out near to the place where Reynolds meant to take the ice and trust to fate and fortune.

There is always such a bustle, stir, and head-splitting excitement and botheration when a ship is leaving harbour for any length of time, that in the case of the *Fear Not*, I think, reader, you and I had better defer our inspection of the ship and her fittings till all the visitors are gone, till the last tearful

farewell has been spoken; till we are over the bar; till the rough old pilot has shaken us by the hand, wished us God-speed, and gone bobbing away in his boat; till we are out and away on the clear blue summer sea, and till all these boxes, bags, and litter have been stowed away in their proper places.

As the vessel steamed away to the north, Colin and Olaf stood on the quarter-deck, and their lorgnettes were turned towards the Broad Hill, which rose green and bonnie on the links 'twixt Dee and Don.

The hill was crowded. They could see the people waving caps and arms, though they scarce could hear them shout. But one group was there that attracted special attention.

"I can see them all," cried Colin; "dear Auntie and Uncle M'Ivor, and honest old Uncle Tom."

"Yes; and beside them is the little widow and 'my son John', and—and my little sweetheart, Katie. Heigh-ho! Colin, I wonder if we will ever, ever see them more."

There were tears in Olaf's eyes that he took no pains to conceal, and perhaps that was the reason why the great Newfoundland, Cæsar, jumped up and licked his face, and little Keltie raised himself as high as his knee.

"Cheer up, Olaf! Here comes Rudland, looking as happy as a king."

Rudland was a full-fledged doctor now, and, despite his roving propensities, he had succeeded in taking his degree with honours, and of this he was justly proud.

Rudland came forward rubbing his hands and laughing.

"Down, Cæsar, down! I do declare the dogs seem to know we are going back once more to the great white land, or rather to any number of unknown lands. Well, friends mine, I think we have about seen the last of Aberdeen for a time. And after all my weary studies I'm not sorry."

"Well, I hope you won't have much practice among us, Rud, either in medicine or surgery."

"O, depend upon it, Colin, I won't use more physic than is absolutely necessary; and if I have to remove your leg, Joe, I'll do it so that you will be actually proud to show the stump all the days and years of your life."

Right abreast of Fraserburgh Reynolds had a very delightful meeting. His old ship *Bladder-nose* was just bearing up for the harbour, and to all appearance she was full to the hatches. There was no time, however, to go on board, but signals were hoisted, and the crews of both vessels manned the rigging and gave three hearty cheers.

Next morning broke gray and hazy over the sea, but there was now no land in sight. As the wind was very light, and rather ahead, steam was still kept up, though Reynolds hoped it would soon blow a seven-knot breeze, and thus enable him to save the coals.

There was every promise, however, of its being a warm and sunny day, and, indeed, the good barque seemed loth to leave the land so far away, for she was doing, under full steam, but little over five knots an hour.

"Well, there is no hurry," said Reynolds smiling, as Joseph put the log-line back in its place.

The day after this was the Sabbath, and Reynolds gave orders for a sort of "muster by open list", as we call it on board a man-of-war, at which everyone on board must answer to his name as it is read out by an officer. This was followed by a general inspection, and next by prayers, or rather church service.

Let us—you and me, reader—attend the muster and inspection. Seeing that, all told, the crew numbered but fifteen men, not to mention the "twa dogs" and the ship's cat, the muster did not take long. The inspection, however, occupied fully an hour.

The *Fear Not* was by no means a large vessel, her tonnage being somewhat under 400 register, but loaded as she now was with coals and stores she must have been well nigh 1000 tons.

As to her rig, she was a barque, although a fore-and-aft schooner like that in which Captain Nansen has sailed might have been handier. A barque, every British boy knows, or ought to know, is square-rigged as to her fore and main-masts, merely the mizen carrying fore-and-aft sails.

Her engines were merely auxiliary, and were but little over 200 horse-power. She had two engineers, a Scot and a

Welshman, both healthy, hardy, and young, and Reynolds had proved before he sailed that they were also well-informed and knew their duty.

The saloon lay aft; not quite so, however, the captain's private cabin being nearest to the stern. The saloon was not large, but it was exceedingly comfortable, and, independent of the captain's cabin, it had four state-rooms opening into it. These were occupied, the first by the mate Joseph and the doctor, the second by Colin and Olaf, the third by Sigurd and the two engineers, and the fourth was reserved for Lord Daybreak when he should come on board near Lena Delta. Right away forward, and between the engine-room and galley, lived the other men.

Cæsar and Keltie and the ship's cat were graciously permitted to choose their own sleeping berths. The cat made her bed on the captain's chair, Keltie preferred to curl up with Svolto forward, while great Cæsar was evidently of opinion that the fourth cabin—his lordship's—was intended for him, and he took possession accordingly. I may as well state here at once that when Lord Daybreak did at last come on board he was warmly welcomed by Cæsar, and allowed at night to take possession of his own bunk, the honest dog having a goat-skin rug on the floor thereof.

To describe the fittings of the *Fear Not* I might borrow a phrase from that poetical though not invariably truthful being—the house-agent, and state that she was furnished with every convenience and luxury.

This was indeed so, for not only were the saloon and 'tween-decks ventilated with warm air, but lit up with electric light. The saloon interiorly was beautifully painted and prettily adorned. The stove itself was a work of art. Then there was a nice little library, well filled with well-chosen but small books, besides a yacht piano and a violin. Indeed, both engineers had been chosen because, in addition to a perfect knowledge of their profession, they were accomplished musicians. Then both Olaf and Colin could play the piano.

As for food: independent of everything they had room for in the shape of ordinary provisions, they carried con-

densed and tinned foods of all kinds, and enough to last for five long years.

Need I say more?

Their dress? Well, of clothing they had no lack, but all was light, all handy, and all of wool, or wool and fur. Even their tents were as light as possible consonant with strength and durability.

The inspection being over, all hands that could be spared from duty were rung into the saloon, and Reynolds himself conducted the service.

It was simple in the extreme. There, before him, lay a Bible, a book of prayer, and a volume of well-chosen sermons. What more was needed? Only the assurance given to them in Scripture that "*where two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them*".

So the first Sunday at sea passed quietly by, and the summer sun sank low in the west, finally disappearing about nine o'clock amidst a beauty and brilliancy of cloudscape that it would have been difficult to surpass even in foreign lands. Five days passed slowly by, and still the weather continued fine. Slowly, I say, because all hands had not yet quite settled down to the new life, and memories of sad farewells and parting tears still kept crowding into their minds.

The good ship was now well up in the Northern Sea, and probably near the latitude of the Faroe Islands. But the summer birds had not yet screamed their last, long farewell. Gulls and kittiwakes still flew around the ship in scores. Mother Carey's chickens, too, darted and skimmed about here, there, and everywhere, and many sea-birds common only to Faroe, Iceland, or Northern Norway paid them visits, much to Olaf's joy.

"They look so homelike, you know, Colin," he said.

"Well, perhaps," said Colin. "I would rather see a sparrow," he added. "Hullo! Joe, why don't you smile?"

"O!" said Joe, "I can't be always laughing, can I?"

"Joseph, you old rogue!" cried Olaf, "we're going to have a gale of wind, I see it in your eye."

"No need for a barometer, then," said Joseph, laughing now. "Ah! here comes the captain."

The barque had been under full sail for several days, the fires being let out, and till now everything seemed snug enough, everything going well.

"Yes, Joseph, I have just had a look at the glass. Well, you must take in sail, I suppose, though it seems almost a pity."

"Better be sure than sorry, sir."

At that very moment the sea, far off towards the horizon, became darker and rougher, and in ten minutes or less the ship gave her first short, angry jerk to leeward, and the wind began to moan ominously through rigging and shrouds. The storm was coming.

"All hands shorten sail!"

"Away aloft!"

All hands on board the *Fear Not*, remember, meant engineers and officers too, everyone who could handle a rope or furl a sail.

CHAPTER II.

AT THE MERCY OF GOD.

O pilot, 'tis a fearful night!
There's danger on the deep.

A GOOD ship and well handled!"

When at sea we often hear these words, and there is comfort in them even to the heart of the merest tyro. But, indeed, tyroes are said to make the bravest sailors. Ah! it is not bravery; it is mere ignorance. Such persons have not been long enough on the ocean to know aught of its innumerable dangers.

But, on that fearful night, when the brave barque *Fear Not* was scudding before the storm, with scarce a stitch of canvas set, save that which was necessary to keep her as she was

going, perhaps there was not a single soul on board, that did not know there was danger on the deep. Even Svolto the boy, though he never had been so far on blue water before, could read it in the serious looks of the sailors.

A good ship and well handled! True. But come on board the *Fear Not* with me for a short time—in imagination. And you may thank Heaven it is but in imagination. We will stagger into the cabin or saloon first, into which open the state-rooms of the officers.

There is not a soul below here at present, for all hands are on deck. There is not a soul below; that is, unless you are generous enough to believe that the pussy who sleeps uneasily in the captain's big chair, and the honest dog who has curled up in Daybreak's berth have souls. We stagger into the cabin then, and when we attempt to sit down easily on one of the cushioned lockers that represent sofas around the big table, we are roughly thrown thereon. Our eyes naturally are attracted to the compass that swings in gimbals beneath the skylight. It is a kind of tell-tale, by which we can measure the awful angles that the vessel is making with the plane of the ocean; her pitching and plunging, her heeling, her careenings to leeward, her uncertain struggles to starboard; her jerking, tossing, and pitiful wallowing in the dark troughs between the mountain-seas.

Down below here, although at no time is the wild roaring of the wind through rigging and cordage absent from our ears, we cannot but listen to the signs—sighs, I may say—of distress, the strained and tortured barque is making. She creaks and groans in every timber. The noise is indescribable, far from pleasant, far, indeed, from reassuring, but high above it sometimes rises the quick, uncertain rattle of the rudder chains. And now and again, as we sit here holding on to the big table, that threatens every moment to burst its lashings and batter us to death against the bulkheads, there comes a steadiness in the ship that is positively alarming. She is engulfed by a green sea, swallowed up as it were. For a time we hear not the wind's wild wail, nor even the groaning of the tortured timbers. We are sinking, we think—going down, down, down to the black

bottom of the ocean. But next moment the good barque shakes herself free once more, and the rolling and turmoil and shrieking and creaking go on as before.

Thud! thud! Do you hear the waves how they buffet her? She trembles all over like a spirited steed in fear or sudden fright.

It is indeed a fearful night!

We lean back now as well as we can, with faces upturned, to listen to the wind. Every nautical writer attempts to describe this sound. Every nautical writer tries in vain. But there is one thing no listener can help noticing, and that is the inconstancy of its force, the ever-recurring remissions or abatements in its exceeding violence. At one moment you think it is about to die down; it seems to have retired for a time. Yes, for a time, but it is only to gather strength apparently; for next minute it is roaring and howling around the vessel, as if the very air were filled with demons bent on wrenching up every bolt and stay, bent on snapping the masts by the board, bent on sinking the apparently doomed ship beneath the maddened waves.

But let us now venture on deck, holding on fearfully as we climb the companion stairs. The ship is battened down, but here is hole beneath this tarpaulin. The ship makes a plunge as we reach the deck, and we are ejected like a stone from a catapult. Down to leeward, and lucky we think ourselves, when we catch the rigging and hang on for life. It is not black-dark to-night! There is a moon yonder behind the rioting clouds. She is never seen, but just suspected. Yet her light is sufficient to reveal the racing foam-crested mountain-seas, the raging, boiling, storm-tormented waves. They tower in front of the barque as she makes those maddened plunges; they curl alongside of her, high as the maintop itself, and as she careens to leeward the very yard-arms seem to rake the waters, and the green seas pour in over her bulwarks till she is all but swamped.

All this we note during a lull. But lo! back rushes the demon of the storm, and now all is mist and spray and froth and smother. We feel we must let go our hold, though to do so is death—instant, terrible. We are gasping

for breath; we are drowning. O, mercy on us, how the wind shrieks and howls; and, mercy on us, how cruelly the waves dart from stem to stern! We are — thank Heaven, there is a lull once more! We see a yellow glimmer high up among the driving clouds, a kind of smudge like dead gold that we know must be the moon. We think of the stars that are far beyond the clouds shining bright and clear, and we take heart of grace, and hope.

If we are wise we will think of something else; we will think of something even beyond the stars—of Heaven itself.

'Tis indeed a fearful night; but are we at the mercy of those threatening waves? No; we are at the mercy of God.

I began this chapter with the words—"a good ship and well handled". Yes, the captain and the mate—mere dark shapes, by the way—are sailors good and true. The two men at the helm will do all that British men can do, and yet for all this, we are at the mercy of God.

For there are other ships at sea to-night as well as we, and not far off, perhaps. During the fierceness of each recurring squall, when all is a mist and a blurr, when the steersmen could not even see the compass, what prevented us from colliding with that ship, which, unknown to us, went driving past our bows? The mercy of God!

What saves the masts that are bending before the gale like fishing-rods from going by the board, from leaping over the side and dragging the vessel, perhaps, on her beam-end? The mercy of God!

What prevents the rudder-chains from snapping, the ship from broaching to? Again, I reply—the mercy of God!

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps on the sea,
And rides upon the storm."

Ah! reader mine, many a brave ship would founder, many a bold barque be lost, despite the best of seamanship, were it not for the mercy of God. How sweet and consoling, then, it is to know that, even on the wildest night at sea, He is near by, and can listen to the plaintive prayer of

the sailor as kindly as to the voice of the landsman on shore!

Though it had been a fearful night the wind had gone down very considerably by breakfast-time next day, though the sea was still running houses high.

The *Fear Not* had indeed been put upon her mettle; yet gallantly she had withstood the brunt of the storm, and the damage done on deck was comparatively small. On the weather side the bulwarks had been smashed and a boat had been stove in, but this was about all the injury to be recorded in the log.

"Well, Joe," said Reynolds as he seated himself at table, "what do you think of her now?"

"Think of her?" said Joe as he placed the log-slate safe in his bunk and came forth into the saloon with a smile on his face, "I think of her now as I did from the first. I wouldn't mind a bit facing a tornado in the *Fear Not*.

"Ah! sir," he continued, taking his plate of fried bacon and eggs from the steward, "if she behaves all along among the ice as she did last night she'll do."

"What think you, doctor?"

"Well, you see," said Rudland smiling, "I can't say that I was in the best situation for judging of her behaviour. You must know, then, that I turned in at eight o'clock, and I've only just turned out."

"Been asleep all that time?" said Colin laughing.

"Sleeping like a twopenny top, my boy. Now, steward, bustle around. No, thanks; no coffee yet. My motto is, strike down all your solids first before you touch coffee or tea. Do this every morning regularly, and you'll live to be a hundred. Steady! Wo! Doesn't she kick just!"

"Well, sir," said Joe, and as he spoke he handed Henry, the steward, his plate for a second helping, "I suppose I'd better shake out a reef or two now that the storm seems over."

Rudland laughed unceremoniously. "I guess," he said, "you'll want to shake a reef out. Are you aware, mate, that makes your sixth egg? Provisioned for five years,

aren't we, Captain Reynolds? Ah! that is a good thing. Take comfort, Joe."

"Well, Joseph," said the captain, "if you think she'll stand more canvas, shake out all the reefs if you like, only—"

"Only what, sir?"

"Don't carry away anything. We don't want to have to rig juries so early in the voyage out. Going home it won't matter so much."

"You leave it to me to-day, sir, and see how the *Fear Not* and I get on. The ship hardly knows me yet. Stop a bit. Another cup of coffee, Henry."

The doctor groaned.

"I think, Joe," he said, "you had better retire now and —get your reefs out."

Joseph was a bold man and a good sailor, and if the *Fear Not* did not know him then, she very soon did. But, considering the way in which the good ship behaved when the mate had the handling of her, I rather think she liked him.

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There often comes a spell of what is called dirty weather after a storm like that which the *Fear Not* had just weathered, and the week that followed that fearful night certainly did not disprove the rule.

However, no one grumbled, for the simple reason that though the wind was high it was fair. It blew from the west, but some points abaft the beam, and by the time it lowered sufficiently to carry every inch of cloth that could be set, the *Fear Not* had rounded North Cape, and was scudding away across Barents Sea.

It had not taken long to repair the boat and the bulwarks, for no very serious mischief had been done. By this time, too, everyone, both fore and aft, had settled down to life on board. Even Dr. Rudland Syme declared that Neptune had sent back his sea legs, that he had not seen since he came home in the *Aurora*.

Since the very bad weather had changed to good, even Caesar was happy. He had sustained several severe falls

while it blew, but he could race about the decks now without fear, and have glorious fun with his wooden ball and his wooden belaying-pin. The crowning ambition of Keltie's life appeared to be the management of Caesar's great ball. In Caesar's absence he had many and many a try at mouthing it, but all in vain.

"Will my mouth never get wider?" he wondered.

Well, there really was a considerable probability that one day he would dislocate his lower jaw altogether. That would make a case for Dr. Syme, who seemed to lament his lack of professional employment. At least he pretended to.

The doctor would look at his messmates every morning scrutinizingly, and then heave a deep sigh.

"Why," he would say, "you are all looking as wholesome and healthy as mountain daisies on a May morning. Joseph, you don't feel any aches or pains anywhere around, do you? Steward, let the mate have some more ham and eggs. Joseph, my hopes are centred in you."

Perhaps the happiest mortal on board the *Fear Not* was the ship's cat, Pussy Baudrons. You see, pussy was a philosopher. She lived in the saloon, because it was the best place. She permitted the captain to nurse and cuddle her of an evening because he was the captain, and she knew it, and knew that the easy-chair belonged to him; she was friendly with the dogs, because it was wisest so to be; and she was honest because honesty was the best policy, as even now she had proved from experience.

Pussy never went on deck when the decks were wet, having a great regard for her pumps, the only ones she possessed. But in fine weather, and when the sun shone, she trotted up the companion and walked the weather-side of the quarter-deck with Captain Reynolds, or with Joe. No, never with Olaf or Colin. They were merely boys, she would have told you, adding that boys, even at their best, are bothersome. You see, then, that Pussy Baudrons was wise in her day and generation; and most cats are.

The weather continued moderately fine. I should have said "very fine indeed", had it not been for the thick white mists that every other day rolled up and quite enveloped

the vessel from stem to stern. So dense, indeed, were these at times that it was quite impossible while standing by the bowsprit to see the binnacle, and even the man at the wheel looked like a spectre.

At such times as these, two men were kept constantly on the outlook both by day and by night.

My clever young reader, I know, will now bring me up with a round turn. "What good," he will say, "could two men or even half a dozen be on the outlook, in a fog so dense that they could scarcely see to count their toes if their feet were bare?"

Well, I confess to you that at such times the expression "on the outlook" is merely a figure of speech. It is used none the less, and the men are used too, and their duty is to make the best use they possibly can, not only of their sense of sight, but that of hearing and feeling as well.

I will give you an example.

It was one day when steering northwards and west that early in the forenoon a dense fog came tumbling across the sea, blotting out the sunshine, blotting out the sky and even the waves. It was all a grope in the dark now, but still the ship held on her course, and no sail was taken in.

"Jack," said one of the men on the outlook, "isn't it getting cold?" He spoke sharply and suddenly.

"Yes," said Jack; "and listen, Bob."

Bob listened.

And both could distinctly hear the sound of breaking water somewhere on the weather bow.

"Ice! ice! ice!" was their shout, followed quickly by the trampling of feet on the quarter-deck, as the officer rushed to help the man at the helm, shouting:

"Hard a port! Hard—hard! Ready about!"

None too soon.

No, for next minute the ice loomed out on the weather quarter like the green-footed ghost it was, and the very spray from the breaking waves being dashed on board. A few feet farther, and the ship would have struck. Another coat of paint, one sailor said, would have fouled her.

Not only Colin and Olaf would have liked to have had a peep at Nova Zembla, but all on board.

It was fated to be otherwise. The fog refused to lift, and Captain Reynolds determined to keep well clear of the land. So the course was altered, and the *Fear Not* kept farther southwards.

Though still far away from the main pack, or great ice-fields of the north, they soon found that there was plenty of ice about, and that some of it was of a highly dangerous character. When the sun shone—and at this season of the year it never sets in these latitudes,—the danger from even the heaviest and greenest of wave-washed bergs could be avoided, but when a dense mist covered all the sea, then the risk was considerable.

The *Fear Not* passed daily almost through streams of every description. Some of these were composed of slush, and slush alone. The waves herein might be high, but they were as smooth as though millions of tons of oil were floating over the surface of the ocean.

While passing through these streams or fields of slush, the progress of the ship was scarcely two knots an hour, and the sound made by bows and sides was very peculiar. Say “Hush—sh—sh—sh!” reader, as long as you have breath, and you have it exactly. It was not a harsh sound by any means, just that long-drawn whispered “Hush—sh—sh!” Simply that, and nothing more.

The next stream might perhaps be one of larger bergs or floes, covered with snow, and, as is usual in these cases, the *Fear Not* was always headed for the bigger of the pieces, and all its lesser brothers and sisters were free to bump against and batter the poor ship’s sides or hull as much as they pleased. When passing through a heavy stream like this, the noise, as heard down below in the saloon, was deafening, fearful. You would have fancied that the good ship was being smashed to atoms by Nasmyth hammers.

Pussy did not like it, I do assure you; nor did Keltie. The former took refuge in the captain’s easy-chair, but Keltie used to run straight forward and go to bed, that is, he hid himself in Svolto’s bunk until all the row was over.

Then he would appear on deck again, looking very much ashamed of himself for having given way to such silly fears.

They also came across streams of pancake ice. But it was the great square and tall icebergs that they really dreaded to meet, and of these they encountered not a few.

So numerous, indeed, did they become at one time that Captain Reynolds had thoughts of getting up steam, so as to be in a better position for backing straight off from any threatening berg they might get too close to.

It is, in my opinion, safer for a ship of the strength of the *Fear Not* to back astern at full speed than to come round. So strong was the *Fear Not*, that a stem-on collision would scarcely hurt her, though it would shake her, but in going about she would expose her bow or more vulnerable side to the force of the rising foot of the great berg. For two-thirds of an iceberg are under water, and this buried portion usually extends for yards on every side of it, and rises or sinks with the motion of the waves.

The *Fear Not*, however, at last reached the Straits of Yugor safe and sound, and cast anchor near a curious little fishing village built at the foot of lofty dark rocks, but well out of the reach of the rising tide.

How pleased Olaf and Colin were to get on shore once more; just to feel their feet upon *terra firma*; to see green moss around them, waving shrubs and wild flowers. All sailors are glad to get on shore when they have the chance.

Yes, Lakoff was there waiting for them. He had been waiting for them for many weeks, living on fish and the eggs of wild-fowl, so he told Reynolds, with a few of such roots as he could manage to excavate. These he ate raw. And, indeed, Lakoff looked starved. He was tall and dark, with high cheek-bones and lantern jaws, and with deep-set, sad eyes that seemed to look one through and through. He was dressed in furs from top to toe.

And there he stood, with a beautiful wise-looking, prick-eared dog at each side of him.

"And you have brought but two, Lakoff? When I saw you at Edinburgh you promised me twenty."

"Twenty I have. O yess, yess. Back in the woods. Listen. Yess, yess."

Reynolds and our younger heroes did listen, and the noise they heard was as if a caravan of wild beasts was encamped near at hand.

"Great Augustus Cæsar!" cried Reynolds, "I hope they won't make that row on board ship. If so, I declare they shall walk the plank."

Lakoff disappeared, and soon he and two young fellows, his brothers, came out of the bush—which Lakoff called "the wood", with all the twenty dogs walking behind in a very orderly way indeed.

Reynolds chose fifteen of the strongest, wisest-looking, and best, but he paid Lakoff for all.

The two dogs that had stood side by side on the beach with Lakoff were evidently great favourites with this honest but strange-looking fellow. He bent down now to bid them good-bye, fondle and caress them, and to his astonishment Reynolds noted that the man was crying.

"Why, Lakoff," said the captain, "I declare you love those dogs! Is it so?"

"Yess, yess, sir," was the reply. "More to me are they than life itself. P'r'aps now Lakoff die directly."

"No, you won't, Lakoff! Listen!"

"Yess, sir, I listen. Yess, yess."

"Lakoff, come with us. Are you married?"

"Yess, yess. But to me the dogs better are than my dame. My brothers feed my dame. I go; I go. Yess, yess, I go."

He threw his arms around the neck of the biggest dog, and he wept again. But this time it was for perfect joy.

Olaf looked at Colin with a meaning glance, but neither made any remark. The exhibition of either sorrow or joy in others should ever be held sacred by those who witness it, and both our young heroes seemed to feel this.

And now, after asking Captain Reynolds what time they must return, they started on a ramble inland, accompanied by Keltie. Cæsar had not been taken on shore that day, for fear of a riot. He was one of the best-natured dogs alive,

but it was nevertheless a question whether he would care to have his ship boarded by a squad like that which Lakoff—a little whip in his hand—stood in the midst of.

Even Keltie had to be held on leash. He appeared exceedingly full of fight, and would have gone to his death right merrily if he could only have got loose.

"O," he seemed to say, "you mongrels look very brave now. Just wait till you get on board and see my big brother Cæsar. He'll throw you all overboard, one at a time, but not until he has pretty nearly shaken the life out of you."

Colin was pleased when he succeeded in coaxing Keltie past the pack, for indeed the language he used was not over choice, judging by the sound of it.

It was doubtless a pleasure to spend a day on shore, but as for adventures, I am sorry to say our heroes had none. They roamed in the wilds, however, for hours, in company with two of the natives, who assured them that there were plenty of both bears and wolves around. Well, there might have been, but if so, they kept well concealed in their dens or caves.

But the views obtained from some of the highest hills amply rewarded Colin and Olaf for their long day's trudge; and when they returned to the ship in time for dinner, both agreed that the time had been well spent.

CHAPTER III.

THE DOGS ON BOARD—CROSSING A DREADED BAR.

WHAT the officers and crew could possibly have done with those dogs, without the assistance of Lakoff, it is impossible to say.

"What a happy thought or inspiration it was to bring him!" said Reynolds more than once; "and the queer thing is this, it came all of a sudden. If I hadn't seen the poor

fellow shedding tears on the neck of his favourite, it never would have occurred to me."

"Then it would have been farewell to sleep," said Colin—

"Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast".

Reynolds laughed.

"It is refreshing," he said, "to hear a quotation from Shakspeare in these far northern wilds. But, Colin, I hope you know a good deal more of the poet's works, for you will have a call to recite, depend upon it, before we reach the pole."

Colin continued:—

"Methought I heard a voice say, 'Sleep no more'.
Those dogs do murder sleep".

"O," cried Olaf, "and you murder Shakspeare! But listen!"

"Listen" he well might say, for at that moment a noise arose from the fore-part of the ship which I cannot find words to describe. It was an awful chorus of barking, yelping, whining, yelling, baying, howling, of all, in fact, that a dog can do with his vocal cords and lungs.

Joseph rushed on deck.

Cæsar sat on the top of the skylight with his great nose in the air sounding his fog-horn, and Keltie stood behind him whiff-whiff-whiffing, till his eyes seemed bulging out of his head.

The row—which would have awakened Rip Van Winkle himself—was happily easily explained. For here stood Lakoff, his hand on his heart, and looking the very picture of sadness.

"O, Lakoff, can't you stop that fearful din?"

"It is for me they mourn. It is that I am here they do weep their grief."

"Well, great Augustus! go to them, Lakoff. Let them weep their grief in your ear, but not so loud. Bother it all,

Lakoff, they'll drive us all mad! Silence, Caesar! Down below, Keltie! Why, the good ship *Fear Not* will speedily be turned into a floating lunatic asylum."

"But, sir—"

Joe made a rush forward, and Lakoff followed at a swinging trot. As soon as he reached the place where the dogs were, there was silence deep as death.

The poor animals crowded around Lakoff and fondly licked his hand.

"Now I can listen to you, Lakoff," said Joe.

Lakoff in his rather pretty broken English then explained that the dogs must have a kind of house on deck, that constant chaining would destroy their tempers. Also, that he desired Svolto, who appeared to be fond of the dogs and the dogs of him, to keep watch and watch with him.

"So shall it be, sir," said Lakoff, "that the gentlemans of this ship shall close their eyes in peace."

"Thank heaven," cried Joe, "for that assurance! You shall have all your desires, Lakoff, and I'll see about the building of the kennel at once."

Joe went aft to report, and right glad was everybody in the saloon to know that there was a solution of the dog difficulty.

Twixt the fore and the main-masts boats had been placed. Now these were put elsewhere, and not one kennel, but two were built, with a strong partition running fore and aft between them, so that when Lord Daybreak came on board with his team, the two packs would be divided, and thus much needless fighting and quarrelling prevented.

The very next day the dogs were turned into their new quarters, and delighted they appeared to be to get under shelter, for during the last few days a sleet-laden head wind had been blowing, and as the *Fear Not* had frequently to put about from tack to tack, heavy and warm though their jackets were, the unfortunate dogs were drenched to the skin with the driving spray.

These sledge-dogs, it is very true, are exceedingly hardy, and will sleep at night on the snow, or even under the snow; but there is one thing on shore which they can always get,

and which conduces to the health of dogs as well as men, namely, exercise. To a great extent they were deprived of this on board ship. Besides, dogs of this breed, or indeed of any breed, can stand frost or snow with far less danger than wet or damp.

Svolto was delighted to be told off for a new post, looking upon his situation of under-keeper as a step in the rank of promotion. When spoken to for the first time on the subject, his face was quite a study in the bland. It beamed all over and his eyes sparkled, while he lifted foot after foot like a soldier marking time. "Oh—h—h!" he said. But never another word, only I am sure that Svolto wouldn't have been more pleased had Joe asked him to take charge of the ship herself.

There was peace now, and let me say at once that there was peace for evermore on board the ship—that is, from kennel noises; for when Lakoff himself was not there Svolto was, and as soon as there was the slightest signs of disturbance, a word or two or the cracking of the little whip was enough to restore matters to the *statu quo*.

There was a king-dog in the kennel. This, I need hardly say, was one of the noble fellows over whose neck Lakoff had shed tears, when he thought he was parting with him for ever and aye. He really was a splendid, handsome fellow, and a dog of the greatest intelligence. But he brooked no rivalry either in surly looks or growling. If any other dog in the pack dared but curl his upper lip, Chauss punished him at once, though by no means unmercifully.

Well, Chauss was undoubtedly king-dog in his pack, but was he king-dog in the ship? Let us see.

One day shortly after the kennels had been built, Lakoff appeared once more before Joe on the quarter-deck, his hand upon his heart, the sad, sad look in his dark, unfathomable eyes.

"What, more sorrow, Lakoff?" said Joe. "What is it now?"

Joe was smiling his pleasantest, and this encouraged Lakoff to proceed.

"It is," he said mournfully, "that last night when the

sun was creep down near the sea, Chauss do speak his grief to me."

"Well, what did Chauss tell you?"

"He speak me so: 'Look,' he say, 'my people plenty much pain in limbs have got. Die my people soon will. Hee-ho!'"

"Well, and what did you answer?"

"I speak Chauss in his right ear, and I say him so: 'Chauss, your people will never die. I go myself to Captain Joe, and I speak him to let your people run free as wild wolves for one hour at noon. So, Captain Joe, to you I come.'"

"Right, Lakoff! Right, my good fellow! Speak Chauss again, and say him so: 'Good old Joe has listened to your plaint, and every day you and your people shall get out for a run.'"

From eleven a.m. until half-past, therefore, and again from six p.m. until seven o'clock, came to be known on board as the dogs' dancing hours.

And dance they did.

O, the wildness of that caper around the deck! But there is no doubt that even the sight of these dogs at play did our heroes good. There is nothing like fun for keeping one in good health. And here there was fun indeed, fun indescribable! Two dozen schoolboys at leap-frog would not be a circumstance to it, as a Yankee would say. Five score of black boys dancing on Zanzibar sands—and I have seen that—would have seemed but a spiritless sight after witnessing this daft, droll, canine game at romps.

Now, it had been thought best to shut up Cæsar and Keltie in a cabin during the time for exercising the sledgedogs.

Cæsar and Keltie took a different view of the matter, apparently, and one evening, the state-room door having been left unfastened, says Cæsar to Keltie:

"Keltie, I'd like to go on deck to see that mongrel pack you have so graphically described to me."

"Wiff—wiff—wiff!" says Keltie. "I'll soon scrape open the door for you."

And he did.



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LAKOFF HAS A TALK WITH HIS FRIEND CHAUSS.



"Now," said Cæsar, "come along, Keltie, and if there is a dog in the whole pack that refuses to lower his tail to me, overboard he goes before he can bark."

I do not think I am wrong in saying that when Cæsar suddenly appeared in the centre of that pack of sledge dogs, everyone who saw it dreaded instant bloodshed, riot, and death.

No one spoke, however. Lakoff held up his hand, as if advising silence, and no interference. And there stood Cæsar, with Keltie beneath him, but eager for the fray. The sledge dogs for a moment or two appeared paralyzed with terror.

"O, you great, wonderful being," some seemed to say, "where did you come from? Are you a wolf, or are you a bear?" Every tail was lowered. Some whined and cried, some stole quietly back to kennel, while one or two crept towards the noble Newfoundland, abject, and on their stomachs, as if begging for mercy.

Cæsar took no notice of any of these, but advanced haughtily, and with head in air, to the spot where the king-dog himself stood, apart from his subjects.

Cæsar uttered no growl. He simply looked down at the king, without, however, lowering his head. And if ever a dog spoke, here is what Cæsar said:

"You're king of the pack, aren't you? Well, I'm king of the castle. Look at me. Rather more here than you could eat if you tried, isn't there? But, big as I am, I'm not a bad fellow, and I like fun better than fighting any day. Now, which shall it be?"

The king wagged his tail.

Cæsar and Keltie wagged theirs.

And before anyone on board that ship could have said "marling-spike", round and round the decks big Cæsar and Keltie were flying, pursued by the whole yelping, daft, droll, pack. Anon Cæsar would roll over, and the pack pretended to devour him; not an angry growl was heard, it was all fun, fun, fun, and the crew of the *Fear Not* now laughed louder than ever, and I suppose grew fatter, if there be any truth in the old saying, "Laugh and grow fat".

After this pleasant episode there was no more occasion to keep Cæsar and Keltie confined during the dogs' hour. Indeed, those sledge dogs had taken a very great fancy to the pair of them. Sometimes Olaf and Colin kept Cæsar and Keltie back for a little while after King Chauss and his people were let free. Then would they wander aimlessly round the decks looking for their absent friends, and seeing them not, the king himself would sit on his haunches and howl in the most melancholy and lugubrious style. Of course, all the others joined, each on a keynote chosen indiscriminately, so that the music was as deafening as that of seven Highland pipers on a fair day all playing different tunes.

“Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York.”

Thus Colin as he let Cæsar loose.

Then, indeed, as the great Newfoundland came capering into the centre of the pack, leaping over the heads of three or four of them perhaps, was melancholy changed to mirth, just as when after the transformation scene at a pantomime the clown appears with his “Here we are again” and “Now the fun begins”.

But the clown's fun is oftentimes a very spurious kind indeed, but that of these honest dogs was heartfelt and very real.

Am I telling you too much about these dogs, reader? I cannot help it, for, like all boys—and I am still a boy at heart—I love dogs. Besides, our story will take a leap soon to stranger, wilder, mayhap sadder scenes, so let us enjoy our dogs while we may.

One thing I must tell you. From the very day these animals came on board they began to get better in condition, stronger, fatter, happier, and brighter in the eye. For at first some of them were so worn and thin, it looked as though their skins alone were preventing their bones from falling asunder.

The *Fear Not* had now passed across the sea of Kara and

was heading away for the cape called Chalyuskin, or quite as properly perhaps, Severo.

This cape is the most northerly land on the continent of Asia, and, as a glance at the map will show you, is Russian territory. Farther south, and far beyond the cape, was Lena Delta, near to which Reynolds expected to meet Lord Day-break, who, as we know, had been travelling for many, many months, with a view, he told our heroes before he started, of writing a book, if ever he was fortunate enough to get back home again.

Well, hitherto Reynolds in his brave ship had been wonderfully lucky. He was certainly struggling hard at present. It was, indeed, a battle 'twixt the *Fear Not* and the ice, but, compared to most seasons, the seas were marvellously open and free.

Moreover, the wind was fair, and it blew a sturdy breeze. Every inch of sail was set, and sometimes she needed all this press of canvas to get her through the streams. The only cause of regret that Reynolds had rested on the fact that he had somehow managed to miss the vessel at Waiget that was bringing him an extra forty or fifty tons of coals. It is true he might have waited at the place of rendezvous for her, but he considered it of not so much moment. He would save the coals he had with the help of the wind.

After doubling the cape the course steered was south-east by east, until they reached the Delta.

This they did safely at last, but not without further adventure, for they encountered a terrible gale among the ice off the Anabara river. The ice here was all loose, owing, no doubt, to the large amount of fresh water poured into it by the Anabara and other great streams.

But the danger to be feared during this storm was more on account of the ice than the cold high wind and the raging sea.

It might well have been said once again, that they were at the mercy of God. But for His guiding hand all their efforts could hardly have sufficed to save the ship.

The cannonade, when the gale was at its height, was terrific, fearful. I call the battering that the *Fear Not*

received in her bows and sides a "cannonade"; the pieces of green ice seemed to be hurled at the beam-ends of the unfortunate ship as if by the hands of gigantic Tritons—the mythical sea-gods of ancient times. Probably no ship that ever ventured among the ice during a gale of wind could have stood this terrible bombardment, but the *Fear Not* was exceptionally, marvellously strong in build. Stays, beams, strengthenings of every kind that could be devised, had been arranged while she was being built, so that she was stronger far than if she had been a solid block of wood.

For three days the storm raged with unabated violence, and then, at last, Reynolds found himself at the mouth of the Olenek river.

Dare he venture in? He must try to, else probably he might get swept by the gale farther east and dashed upon a lee shore.

The river seemed to enter the Arctic Ocean slantingly, and to flow from south-west to south-east. But the appearance of the bar to-day, with its thundering and foaming waves, that raised their crests so high in the snow-laden air, would have appalled a less dauntless heart.

But Reynolds was determined. He himself and Sigurd took the wheel; Joseph stationed himself on the bridge, to advise, to order, and command.

On they dash! Now, indeed, it is death or life. There is a break yonder in the awful line of breakers, and Joseph guides the vessel straight for that.

All sail is still set. Not one is clewed. They may need all their strength to send them across if they strike bottom or bump. If they get fast entirely—then, strong as they are, the masts will snap like reeds; and, strong as the ship is, she will be dashed in pieces by those.

On they sail—nay, rush. The vessel, caught on the top of a huge wave, speeds forward like an arrow from a bow.

They are on the bar now. On each side thunders the breaking water—a deafening, awesome sound.

Reynolds and Sigurd keep their eyes on Joseph. His voice cannot be heard, but his motions are just visible

through the mist of snow and driving spray. He is guiding them by his arms alone.

And now—yes, now, heaven be praised!—they are safe at last, and soon at anchor in deep water, but under the shelter of high rocks and cliffs.

And this was the rendezvous. Here was a village of huts, and as soon as a boat could be called away, Reynolds himself landed, with Sigurd and Lakoff, to make inquiries.

But those humble fisher folks—and ah, how wretched and lonesome they looked!—had heard nothing of any English stranger, and nothing of any man with dogs. This they told Lakoff in broken Russian, and this he interpreted to Reynolds in rather less broken English.

Reynolds was indeed disappointed. Lord Daybreak was his especial friend, and he was, moreover, a good sportsman. The dogs he chose would be better and stronger far than those brought by Lakoff.

Well, anyhow, he would wait. He would wait a week, or even a fortnight. Longer he feared to remain, for the summer was already drawing towards a close; the voyage still before them was a long one, and he must push north and east beyond the New Siberian Islands before the frosts of later autumn should seal up the sea against him, and, mayhap, damage his prospects of success.

The country all round here was barren and dismal in the extreme, and Colin and Olaf, who had, as usual, accompanied Reynolds on shore, were not sorry when they returned on board to the comforts of their cosy saloon.

But next morning it was clear and bright, and the wind had gone down. Well, the country, rough though it was, looked inviting in its mantle of purest snow.

“I’ll tell you what it suggests, Captain Reynolds,” said Olaf.

“Well?”

“A jolly sledge-ride.”

“Capital idea! and Lakoff shall drive.”

The idea was certainly a good one, and there was no one it pleased better than Lakoff himself. The man, quiet and unfathomable as he seemed, evidently had an ambition, and this was to show off the working qualities of his team.

What a useful fellow he turned out to be too, and what a number of excellent hints he was capable of giving our heroes, one and all! Olaf and Colin watched with the greatest of interest his method of harnessing and of managing his favourites.

When all was ready, a native undertook to guide this flying party across country, and to show them the best route and best road.

He did so by taking them away to a far-off plain or upland, where the danger of capsizing, or of being buried in a snow-drift, was reduced to a minimum.

The weather being bright and clear, expeditions inland were undertaken day after day with the sledge; and not only with the sledge, but on "ski" as well.

This our younger heroes considered quite the grandest sport ever invented, because, instead of doing all the work yourself, you have merely to steer and the dog that you hold in a long leash pulls you along.

"Why," said Colin to the captain one day, as they were returning just a little tired—pleasantly tired, that is, or, as Reynolds called it, "cup-of-tea tired"—"I think, sir, we had better winter here. Sigurd said that to-day he saw tracks of wolves, and that they would be sure to come down in flocks when the nights were once more dark."

"Yes," said Sigurd, who was listening, "if we were frozen in here in that river, the wolves might come in such numbers as would make it very unpleasant for us indeed. They sometimes take possession of the village, so the natives told Lakoff, and not content with eating the offal of fish they find on the shore, devour domestic animals, and at times even tear children to pieces before their parents' eyes."

"An awful sight!" said Reynolds. "But who comes yonder? Surely that is no native who has just rounded the corner of the rock yonder?"

Olaf's lorgnettes were speedily in position.

The figure in question was tall and dark against the snow. He was dressed in boots of skin, in jersey, and hood. In his right hand he held a pole, and he was leading a dog with his left.

"O, sir!" cried Olaf excitedly, "it is Lord Daybreak himself!"

"Thank God!" said Reynolds. "Now at long last, I feel that our expedition is really and truly commencing."

Lord Daybreak came rapidly on. Though older than anyone else belonging to the ship, he was just in the prime of his manhood. As he neared the party a smile lit up his handsome and intellectual face.

"At last, at last!" he cried. "So happy to meet you. Hope you didn't have long to wait? Here I am, though."

"Rejoiced to see you, and how well you look. Why, Lord Daybreak your wanderings have not taken an ounce of flesh off you. You are rosy, and, let me tell you, that you are positively inclined to *embonpoint*."

"Getting fat? O, we will all get fat at the pole. Every creature gets fat in winter in the Arctic. Our friends won't know us when we go rolling home, and when we land on the quay at Aberdeen we will look such a procession of podgies that the good folks of the Granite City will split their sides laughing at us. But, come, I'm hungry.

"Yes, Colin," he added, "my adventures would fill a book. And they will, too."

"Well," laughed Colin, "it will be only a second-hand one, Lord Daybreak."

"Second-hand, Colin! why, what can you mean?"

"It will be second-hand, you know, because you will have told it all to us before ever the public claps eyes upon it.

"And now for tea," said Reynolds.

"Ah! now for tea," cried his lordship; and that was a chorus that everybody joined.

CHAPTER IV.

THREE months have passed away since we left our friends on the banks of the river Olenek going on board to tea, and now it is the dreary month of November here at

the point marked on the map with a cross eastward of the New Siberian Islands, and the sun scarcely deigns to peep over the horizon for any length of time. He seems to tell our heroes that he is tired gazing upon that dreary expanse of blue-black water, of snow, and of ice, and that he must hie him away to greener, lovelier lands far, far south the Arctic circle.

"I must soon bid you good-bye," says the great red, round sun. "Will you be all alive, I wonder, when I see you again, or will you be but corpses frozen in the ice? Yes, I must go; but you will still have the moon occasionally. You will have also the darting aurora to flicker over you and light you through the snow. Then there are the stars, which I am told exist, but never yet have seen. And on nights of storm and tempest, why, down below in your cabin, you shall have the electric light—mankind's invention stolen from me."

A harder struggle than our heroes in their ship *Fear Not* had with the ice during the long months now gone, probably no one on this earth will ever have to face.

At times it was terrible. Acting on the advice of both Sigurd and Lord Daybreak, Reynolds had hugged the northern shores of Yakontsk in Asia as long as possible. For here the water was more free of ice owing to the great influx of mighty rivers, such as the Lena, the Yana, and Indigirka.

But when north of Cape Bear and the Bear Islands the ship's jibboom was pointed almost directly towards the pole, and the fight began in earnest.

Luckily the wind was once more fair, but soon the services of the Scotch and Welsh engineers, who had been doing duty hitherto in any and every capacity, except that of loblolly boys, had to be requisitioned.

But gale after gale had been encountered while the *Fear Not* was still among the comparatively loose ice. These storms were dreaded by day, but when the nights closed in, dark and dismal—ah! reader, think of the position of these mariners then.

You cannot conceive it; hardly would you credit the

awfulness of the scene around them at such times, and the terrible realness of the danger ahead, astern, and on every side.

In an earlier chapter of this book, I have endeavoured to bring before your mind's eye the picture of a lonely ship in the midst of a more southern sea on a night of darkness and tempest.

I should have to multiply the horrors of that fearful night many times over, to give you even a hazy notion of a storm raging among the heavy ice during the darkness of an Arctic night like this.

I have already tried to describe to you the sounds made by the tempest-wind as it goes roaring and shrieking through the rigging and shrouds in an open sea-way, and which at times may be compared to the noise of wild beasts fighting over their prey in forest or jungle. But here among the ice it is not with the ship alone that the fierce wind has to contend. It rages and yells and whistles around the bergs and floes, and it lashes the waves into fury. If, as is too often the case, the air on deck is thick with driving snow and semi-frozen spray, then as you cling to frozen rope or stay you feel stunned and blinded; you can see nothing ahead or near you; your only instinct is to clutch at something, and hold on for the dear life that may still be yours, hold on lest the next wave that dashes in-board, looking green and yellow in the scrimpy moonlight, bears you off to speedy destruction. You can see nothing, but you can hear the appalling thunders of colliding bergs. Ah! that indeed!

Even more terrible is it if the night be comparatively clear, with only gray-brown storm-clouds racing across the disc of the moon, for then you can see the rising and falling of the huge masses of ice, whether green-sided bergs or snow-clad floes. With the mountain waves they are raised high in air; with the waves they form a ragged, jagged horizon of their own, which is all too close aboard of your helpless ship. You can see the foam-crested heads of the irresistible billows as they toss the smaller ice-boulders into the air with a force greater far than that of a cataract, and at times you can see a billow higher than any of its fellows

rolling on with irresistible force till it meets with floes that collide and splinter before it into dust and débris, forming a foaming chaos, into which next moment your ship may dash, to be battered and bombarded with a noise such as one has never heard before, and prays God the Father he ne'er may hear again.

It is on such a night as this that I once more welcome you on board the *Fear Not*.

The moon, you will note—although it is nearly a full one—is not a very great way above the horizon, and thus the curling waves and the rising, falling bergs can be more distinctly seen. But the clouds are large and black, and so the darkness is at times a darkness that lowers itself over ice and seas, that broods, as it were, upon the breast of the ocean, and then, indeed, only Heaven in its mercy can protect our wanderers.

But now a strange thing happens, the *Fear Not* finds herself in an open sea-way, and as the moon shines for a brief space through a rift in the clouds and there is a slight lull in the violence of the wind, all on deck are beholders of the marvel. And the ship drives on and on before the gale, the wind howls as wildly as before through her rigging, the waves beat as fiercely against her timbers, but, lo, the ice has gone!¹

Reynolds is standing on the weather-side of the quarter-deck, near to the man at the wheel, when Sigurd staggers up to him and shouts in his ear:

“Do you think you can lie-to, sir?”

“I will try, Sigurd. Do you think this open water extends far?”

“It may extend for many miles, but beyond it you will find the ice closely packed.”

To lie-to in such a gale is an undertaking of no little risk; but it is safely accomplished at last, and now the ship is in a position of greater safety, and here in the open water she rides out the gale.

During all the long, long hours of darkness and storm the ship has been battened down, and scarcely has anyone

¹ An experience of my own, to the south'ard and west of Jan Mayen Island.

thought of either eating or sleeping. But now morning begins to break hazily over the sea and the circling ice. It will be but a short, short day—an hour of twilight, an hour of glinting, red-beamed sunlight, an hour of gloaming, then the dreary Arctic night again.

But the gale has gone down, and all on board were happy and hopeful once more.

The *Fear Not* was now put before the wind, and soon approached the pack. It was less of a close pack, however, than Sigurd had expected. Indeed, it was comparatively open. But the motion among its component parts was far too great to justify any attempt to bore through it. So the foreyard was hauled aback, and for four-and-twenty hours longer the ship lay to.

The next day was a little shorter than the previous one, but the ice-motion had ceased, so boring was commenced.

For many miles the *Fear Not* sailed and steamed through the pack with very little difficulty. After this her way would have been stopped had not all the hands that could be spared been sent overboard with poles to help to clear her way. All through the darkness, under the light of moon and stars, the work was continued.

The next short day was an ever-to-be-remembered one. They had now reached the highest latitude ever achieved by mariners on this parallel, and away ahead of them, from the crow's-nest, could be seen ice far heavier than any they had yet encountered. Reynolds went up himself, and Day-break followed, both agreeing, when they met, that this was the palaeocrystic ice.

“Well,” said Reynolds that night at dinner, “the first part of our great work, men, has been safely accomplished. We have bored into this great pack or ice-field as far as we have power to. We have clewed our sails, our fires are out beneath the boilers, and we are close alongside one of the largest pieces of flat ice that ever it has been my lot to look upon. Sigurd, have you ever seen a larger?”

“No, sir, nor one so large.”

“And to-morrow,” said Olaf, “we will commence to make a harbour.”

"That's it, Olaf. I want to cut a slice out of that great flat floe large enough to lay the *Fear Not* into. Then, I think, we may lie there in safety for many months to come."

Rudland had been unusually silent for some time. He was unusually busy too with his knife and fork, but he now opened his lips, and spoke as follows:

"Moving on towards our goal,
Floating on towards the pole."

"O, come, come!" cried Colin. "Easy, easy, Rudland! Poetry is not in accordance with your musty, fusty old profession."

"Won't I dose you, lad, for that remark," said Rudland, "whenever I get a chance!"

"Ah, yes! I daresay, but, Rud, my boy, the chance has yet to come. Yes, Joseph, another slice of beef."

"There is no sign of your appetite failing, anyhow," said Lord Daybreak.

"No, I think not. In the matter of appetite, indeed, I believe I take after old father Joseph yonder, who, you must have observed, sir, is always very much at home at meal times."

"Old, indeed!" grunted Joseph. "Why, what airs you very young fellows give yourselves about age! And there isn't such a deal of difference, either, Colin, my cockie, for when I die of old age it will be time for you to make your last will and testament."

The table was cleared at last, for even Greenland men cannot dine for ever. But there was coffee to come, for in the *Fear Not* this delicious beverage was used instead of wine after dinner. Not one tiny little cup for each person, but an honest mugful, with more to follow, if anyone thought it desirable.

And Joe and the doctor and the two engineers now lit their pipes. Lord Daybreak was content with a cigarette, while Reynolds threw himself into his easy-chair, took the cat on his knee, and began to puff away at a big cigar.

Then the steward heaped more coals on the fire, and it

gleamed and blazed so ruddily and brightly that the electric light looked cold compared to it, as indeed it was.

“Henry,” said Reynolds, “bring them out.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” said Henry.

“What is the mystery, sir?” said the Scotch engineer Donaldson, removing his meerschaum for a moment from his lips.

“You’ll see in a minute.”

Every eye was turned towards dark-haired Henry as he came solemnly forth from the captain’s state-room carrying something which he now placed at his master’s feet.

“Why,” cried Joseph, who sat next to Reynolds, “why, keel-haul me, boys, if the skipper ain’t going to bend a pair of fur-lined slippers!”

Colin and Olaf crowded forward to look, and both engineers burst out laughing.

“Well,” said Joe, “it’s the first time ever I saw you go in for luxury. It is surely the sign of something.”

“It is the sign of something, most certainly,” said Reynolds. “It is a sign, my dear Joe, that we have taken the ice; it is a sign that winter has come, and for many months, may be for a year, may be for two, there will be no more storms at sea, no more topsails to reef, no more tack and half-tack or lying to, and a sign, Joe, that I mean to make myself thoroughly comfortable and at home. Steward, I shall have another cup of coffee.”

“And, steward,” said Lord Daybreak, “when you have ministered to the wants of our good captain, take these keys and open my big drawer. There, at the bottom, you will find a pair of slippers; bring them here. My sister put them there.”

“And, steward,” said Colin, “when you have quite finished with his lordship, take my keys, and at the bottom of my drawer you will find a pair of warm slippers; my aunt put them there.”

“And I,” said Olaf, “have a mother who was equally mindful. Steward, kill two birds with one stone.”

“And I have a sweetheart,” said Joe, “and the girl didn’t forget her Joseph either.”

And so it came to pass that in less than ten minutes everyone around that stove had his feet encased in a pair of comfortable wool-lined slippers, with the exception of Sigurd, and he had bent an enormous pair of hairy lampar-shoes.¹

Then it might have been said that all were settled, and certainly everyone looked contented and happy.

After talking and smoking for nearly an hour, there was a lull in the conversation, broken at last by Reynolds himself.

"Come," he said, "I think Pussy Baudrons here is showing us a very good example. She is singing. Can't you boys give us some music?"

"I shall be a boy for once," said Daybreak, rising and seating himself at the piano.

"Something simple," said Reynolds, "if you please, Lord Daybreak."

"Daybreak without the 'Lord', if you please," was the reply. "Come, we are now a little republic; we are all equal, with one exception. You are captain, and king, and when it suits us we will call you 'captain'."

Daybreak was really an accomplished musician. Olaf stood by his side and turned over the leaves. Presently Donaldson's violin was tuned, and chimed in, with its long-drawn notes, its well-managed shifting, and heart-stirring tremolo.

Keltie nudged Cæsar with his nose.

"Can't we give them a note too?" said Keltie.

"We'll try," said Cæsar; "it will only seem friendly."

Then high above the notes of violin and piano rose Cæsar's fog-horn—"Wo—how—ow—ow—ow!" and Keltie's wicked "Wiff—wiff—wa—ow!"

Together their voices made a strange accompaniment. Nor could they be quietened for a time. Even a threatened back-hander from Donaldson's bow had no effect upon the bow-wows. But Henry himself solved the difficulty at last, and bought them off with a big bone each.

¹ A kind of Norwegian boot, very soft and easy for the feet.

A very pleasant evening was spent, for, as in Burns’ “Tam o’ Shanter”,

“The nicht drove on wi’ sangs and clatter,”

till all retired.

All retired, but not to sleep. At all events, everybody next day at breakfast told everybody else that sleep for a long time was impossible, owing to the excessive quiet and stillness of all the surroundings, and the absence of motion in the ship.

Breakfast, you must remember, was discussed by electric light, for the day now was scarce worth calling a day.

When all hands were called after prayers to consider the great engineering feat of excavating a *portus salutis*, or harbour of safety, the stars were shining large and clearly, and there was just the slightest glimmer of roseate aurora away in the north, while all beneath the snow-clad ice lay, white and silent—

“Dead nature in her winding-sheet”.

“Now,” said Reynolds, when all were aft around him, “now, men all, for I address you officers as well as seamen and artificers as simply ‘men’. It is a grand old word, and I feel quite certain that we are all going to do our very best to earn the title. Our very lives depend upon our being good-tempered and unselfish, each one thinking as much about his neighbour as about himself. If ever the teaching of the gentle Jesus should bear fruit, it is in such a community as ours:

“‘Love thy neighbour as thyself’.

Men, I am going to try to make that my motto; will you join me?”

“We will! we will!”

“Thank you for that hearty response, and thank God for it too. I am going to say no more. I never was clever with my tongue; and all my life, though it isn’t an extraordinary long one, I’ve noticed that the men who talked the most worked the least.”

“Right, sir.”

"Now, men, you see that iceberg, or floe-berg. The fellow isn't tall, bar the hummock, which will make a grand look-out post, and from which Joseph, our mate, can catch his lunars. Well, we've got to tackle that fellow. We've got to hack a great hole in his ribs big enough to hold the *Fear-Not*, and the sooner we begin the better."

"So, now, men, cast off your extra garments. Joseph, get up the ice-saws and axes, and we'll all bear a hand right merrily. Cheerily does it, boys! Hurrah!"

"Hurrah!" rose the echoing cheer.

And off went jackets and coats.

There was no wind, but even had

" . . . Biting Boreas, fell and doure ",

been blowing his worst, the way all hands, without a single exception, went to work would have kept them warm.

Those ice-saws are unwieldy things to handle. Those on board the *Fear Not* were about sixteen feet long, with cross-handles at the top, on to which four men could bend at a time.

The making of the *portus salutis* was a far more difficult piece of engineering than had been anticipated, and took nearly a whole week to complete, for each ice-block, as it was cut away, and all the débris chipped off with the axes, were hoisted right up by means of block and tackle. When the work got near to the water, the difficulty was increased, and now blasting powder was frequently used. Care had to be taken, however, to prevent the kegs of powder from being floated under the ship herself, for the current ran strong.

But the harbour was finished at last, and the good ship was warped into it, broadside on to the other floes around. Not an inch of the vessel was left endangered. Indeed, so far into the ice harbour was she brought and secured, that there would be but little danger of even the hull being scraped—as far as could be foreseen, that is. A large iceberg pressed alongside could do no damage; tiny ice-blocks or debris might. However, at present there was none of that about.

The *Fear Not* was now in winter quarters, and just as safe as safe could be. No one dared say more than that.

Before the harbour was quite completed, our heroes had bidden farewell to the sun for long, long months to come.

On that last day he had just appeared over the horizon, tipping all the hummock tops with his blood-red beams. Next day he appeared not at all, but the few clouds that lay along the horizon in streaks and fleeces were a glorious study in crimson, yellow, and bronze for fully an hour, while the sky, close to the rugged snow-line, was of a deep and splendid orange colour, shading off above into yellow, and finally into emerald green.

It was the glow of sunrise and the beauty of sunset both combined.

Day and night had met. Night and day were bidding each other a long farewell. And the glory of that painted sky was but hung up as a token that day would come again.

For three long weeks' silence unutterable reigned all over the great and illimitable field of snow and ice. No; it was not all dark; they had the companionship of the glittering stars and planets. With every star our heroes made themselves acquainted, they were friends that never left them, and with every planet, too, shining visitors that dropped in to spend a while with them, but that could not always stay.

Then there was the moon. Brightly enough she shone, and for a great portion of her time she went round and round the sky, and never set at all.

It was a pleasure, for Colin and Olaf at all events, to know that their friends far away in bonnie Scotland might be gazing at the moon night after night and thinking of them.

Ah, but they must not let their minds dwell too much on home. What an exceedingly long time it would be before they could reach their native land again!

“Hullo, you star-gazers!” cried Rudland, surprising the pair of them one day as they stood beside the binnacle, their faces both turned skywards. “Hullo! what does this mean?”

“It means,” said Colin, “that we’re both doing a think.”

“Yes, and it is a think about home. Well, let me catch

you doing much more of it. I am medical officer in charge of this ship, and two of my most faithful servants are Messrs. Calomel and Jalap."

"What are the boys getting lectured about?" said Joe, coming up.

"O," cried Olaf laughing, "you had better look out too, Joe. If Dr. Rudland Syme catches you thinking about that girl of yours, as I was just now about my Katie, he'll work the romance out of you in no time with a dose of salts and senna leaves."

Rudland made a grab at Olaf's ear, but Olaf was too quick to be caught. But that day at dinner the worthy doctor took occasion to give his messmates his views with regard to the prevention and cure of nostalgia.

"What ship did you say?" asked Joe.

"Nostalgia is the medical term for home-sickness, and you needn't grin, Joe; it is, or it comes in time to be, that is, it develops into one of the worst forms of monomania. Sometimes the disease is called nostomania, being derived from the two Greek words."

"O," cried Colin, "for mercy's sake, Rud, let us dine in peace!"

"Wowff!" barked Cæsar.

And the doctor sighed.

"More anon," he said, and continued his dinner.

CHAPTER V.

THE GREAT ICE PALACE.

MANY weeks had not passed away ere our heroes, frozen up here in this dismal pack, were treated to frequent displays of that wondrous and mysterious transformation scene, the aurora borealis.

The stars they had always with them, the moon stayed

and cheered the lonesomeness of life for at least a fortnight, but the aurora was just as erratic as it was magically beautiful.

I have often attempted to describe this strange but natural phenomena, but never with satisfaction to myself and never, I fear, graphically enough to bring the display before the mind's eye of my reader with any degree of correctness.

On the sea of ice the whole sky becomes illuminated; the merry dancers, as the Scotch seamen call them, are here, there, and everywhere, in bows, in waves, in fringes of light that dazzle the eye, in spears, and even in spear-armed armies that advance across the sky till they meet and clash with, I verily believe, some slight noise. This sound, which may or may not be imaginary, is very low. Only on the stilllest of starry nights may you hear it. It is a kind of "hush—sh—sh", as if angels in heaven were whispering to those on earth. If you wish to hear something exactly like this strange sound, rub your finger rapidly to and fro across the page of your book and — listen.

Oftentimes the aurora is coloured with roseate hues, or green and blue alternating with red. Sometimes the whole sky is blood red. The strangest sight I think I ever saw was a display of crimson aurora flickering through a shower of falling snow. Nothing I had ever beheld before was so strangely, weirdly beautiful.

Just a word or two concerning the domestic life of our heroes during this first lonely winter.

Recognizing the fact that if his people were not kept amused and employed, they would mope and turn melancholy—a melancholy that might even induce Dr. Rudland Syme's mania nostalgia, Reynolds was never tired of catering for the benefit of the crew all told.

The first month passed quickly enough away. And silence all this time reigned throughout the ice-fields. The sea was very far away now indeed—open blue water, I mean—for all the country was locked firmly in the icy grasp of winter.

But about the middle of December, from the far-off tumbling ocean there came a heavy swell, which was sufficient

to raise the bergs and swing the floes with a noise that it is impossible to describe. In addition to the usual shrieking, yelling, and tearing sounds always heard during an ice-crush, or when a ship is in the "nips", there were frequent reports louder than the loudest thunder, and these were reverberated far and near from the clouds, that at this time brooded over the ice-fields, rendering the darkness intense.

But in a few hours' time the swell and the noises passed away, and the stars once more shone out as clear and bright as before.

"Well," said Reynolds that same day—(N.B. It is impossible for a writer on the Arctic regions not to use the word "day" at times, and it is intended to mean that portion of the twenty-four devoted to work, to exercise, and the taking of food. By night, on the other hand, is meant the hours of sleep.)—"Well," Captain Reynolds said, "I am not sorry for that ice-crush. It was certainly a strong one, and that great floe alongside did try hard to scrape us a bit. But you see, boys, we are safe. And so I feel happy."

Breakfast was on the table every morning at half-past eight. The bells were still struck precisely as if the ship had been at sea; and although watches were not kept by all hands, there was always a sentry on duty. Not invariably a seaman, mind you. No; for, with the exception of the captain, and Lakoff, and Svolto—the latter two having plenty of work among the dogs—every officer or man took his turn at sentry-go.

Reynolds would have willingly excused Lord Daybreak, but Daybreak resolutely refused to be excused.

"I am but one in our little republic," he said, "and I must take my turn with the rest."

But long before the steward had struck the gong for breakfast, Colin and Olaf had turned out—yes, and had their cold bath.

Marvel not at this, reader; even in winter in the Arctic regions a man may have his tub and benefit thereby too. There was plenty of salt-water, for the ice-hole alongside was kept constantly open, and when the temperature of the air was far far below zero, you must remember that going

into water is really getting out of a cold medium into a comparatively warmer one.

After dressing, a dash up and down the decks with Cæsar and Keltie put even a keener edge on their appetites.

If, however, the weather was still and starry, then, after the bath, they got overboard for their morning scamper, and had ten minutes of really jolly fun. This concluded, they could eat a breakfast that caused Rudland to despair of ever having the names of Olaf Ranna or Colin M'Ivor on his sick-list.

I am afraid some of the older folks lit their pipes soon after breakfast; but they did not smoke for any length of time. Reynolds would brook no idleness. The better educated officers or men belonging to the quarter-deck took observations, and wrote their log every day. Even Colin and Olaf kept a log. The temperature of the air and the temperature of the sea were entered at least twice a day, and also the force of the wind, if wind there was; the state of the sky as to clouds, moonlight, or aurora, and anything else that might be of interest outside the ship. Everything done inside the ship was duly logged also. This log-keeping is irksome at first, but one soon gets up to it, and even comes to like it.

The men were always set to work at something, and Reynolds endeavoured to make that something as pleasant as possible.

The dogs had a whole hour's scamper every forenoon now, and one hour and a half in the evening. So that the second dog-watch, from six till eight p.m., was really and truly a dog-watch. The whole of the deck had been canvassed over. It was, indeed, one huge tent, and it was under this that, if the weather was at all windy, the dogs had their exercise.

Daybreak had brought with him only ten dogs. They were, however, very large and fine, and for a time the king-dog of this little pack seemed inclined to fight with big Chauss. But Chauss had begged to be excused. He did not lower either head or tail, however, and a deal of very rough language passed between them. Then Cæsar himself

and his little satellite Keltie had come upon the scene. Caesar walked round the new king once or twice, and there was no more word about fighting.

Luncheon was partaken of in the saloon at one o'clock, but forward the others dined at half-past twelve.

Work or amusement, such as games on the ice and snow, or on board, as the case might be, was the rule of the afternoon.

Tea was served at five o'clock, and the saloon dinner at half-past six. Anyone, therefore, among the quarter-deck people who thought his appetite was not already good enough could improve it by a half-hour's run with the dogs before sitting down. But, indeed, no one seemed likely to lose either heart or appetite for the present at all events.

Every evening was devoted to a merry meeting of some kind, for the men were invited forward to listen to the music and singing, as well as to the stories, and they were also treated to coffee and biscuits.

Biscuits with butter, mind you. Reynolds had not forgotten the craving he and his little band had experienced while crossing the highlands of Greenland, for fatty matter of all kinds. And here this craving was developed by many of the crew into almost a passion. I am certain that if a seal or seals had been caught they would have eaten the blubber.

But the men from forward were expected not only to listen to the singing or yarn-spinning of others, but to contribute in some way or other to the evening's entertainment. And so the "forenights" were passed away most pleasantly.

Every morning there were prayers, and every Sunday a sermon was read in the saloon, psalms and hymns sung, and prayers read or said.

I think, though, that the idea which Colin broached one day in January was a very good one.

"Why not build an igloo?" he said.

"Yes,—good!" cried Joe. "A snow-house!"

"An ice-palace, Canadian fashion," said Daybreak.

"Hurrah!" cried Olaf, "the very thing. What say you, sir?"

"O, by all means, Colin; you can mention the matter to-day to the rest."

"Beware of frost-bite, mind you, while at work," said Rudland. "I don't want to treat frost-bite; it is only a kind of exaggerated chilblain at best, and any old wife could see to it. Give me a case of pleurisy or pneumonia; science has got to come to the front in that."

So the building of the ice-palace was proceeded with forthwith. The weather happened to be still, and there was a lovely flood of moonlight. The palace was erected on the largest adjoining floe, the blocks—or say bricks, if you choose—from which it was constructed being procured from the hummocks and even from the bergs themselves.

A considerable deal of work had to be expended in the fashioning of those bricks, in order that they should lie fair and square and plumb, the one above the other, or rather each brick overlapping the ends of two, just as you can see in any wall. The mason's motto, as you may be aware, is—

"Don't put a stone above a stone,
But put a stone above two".

Before a block was raised into position, a little water was thrown over the place where it should lie, and this speedily becoming frozen, acted as a natural and very strong cement.

Of course, it was the roofing of the palace that required the greatest skill; this was arched, and a wooden support was needed under each row till the two rows, the right and the left, met in the centre, and the keystone ice-brick was put in; then the wooden support was at once pulled from under, and that part of the roof was firm and secure. In this way the whole of the roof was built.

But it was on the frontage, and the archway over the door, and on two square flanking towers that the principal decorative skill and art were expended; and, when finished, these really looked very beautiful, and glittered in the starlight as if they had been constructed from the very purest of crystal.

The construction of the whole place did not occupy more

than three weeks, although the builders only worked a few hours daily.

The temperature of the great ice-field had meanwhile fallen lower and lower till 40° below zero was reached. But when there was no wind the cold was not complained of very much, except at night, after one got into bed; then there is no word in the English language to express the misery the cold caused until one gradually got warm. Everybody slept with the bed-clothes completely over his head. Warmth was thus more easily obtained and also maintained.

Sometimes a snow-storm, or a storm of wind alone, went raging and howling across the icy wilderness, and the men were then confined to the ship, and, indeed, spent much of their time below; for a draught blowing in through the canvas tent on deck seemed to cut one through and through like a knife or a sword.

It was during such wind-storms or tempests, that it needed all the courage and mental strength of those undoubtedly brave men to enable them to keep up their spirits. O, the melancholy wailing of that fierce, wild wind! It seemed to be speaking to them, telling them mournful tales, or singing to them songs of sorrow, of hopelessness, and death.

And yet, let it be here recorded as a proof, perhaps, of the power of the material over the distinctively spiritual, that no sooner did the wind die away, the clouds drift from athwart the sky, and the moon, or moon and stars once more shine forth, than the minds of all on board sprang back, as it were, to their old happy level, and singing and laughing were heard again all over the ship. The very dogs, that before had lain still and quiet—Caesar oft-times sighing, as great dogs do, you know—now felt the exhilaration, and went daft with joy at the sight of the stars.

After a wild snow blizzard there was always work for the men for several days, for the tent had never wholly escaped damage from the icy fingers of the blast, and the wonder often was that it was not rent into frozen ribbons, and scattered over the pack.

The palace, too, needed seeing to after a snow-gale, for some portions of it were usually completely covered with the drift and the ice-dust.

No less than two stoves were arranged in the hall. The floor was planked in portions; there was a wooden stage, and on nights when a concert was to be given the yacht piano itself was requisitioned from the ship's saloon, and the fires lit hours before the performance took place.

The opening night had been a very glorious one, for Nature herself gave a grand display of fireworks, by which I must be understood to mean the aurora borealis. The aurora, indeed, that night seemed specially ordered for the occasion, and was of the most brilliant colours, great curtains of phosphorescent flame dancing and flickering around the doorway and flanking towers, in a manner that was really magical.

Until this winter neither of our young heroes knew that he could write anything that was fit to read. But suddenly their genius broke out in a new place, and they found themselves every forenoon collaborating in the writing of a play. It was not a long one by any means, and it required only the authors, with Rudland, and one of the seamen forward—who was very clever—to effect its production. But in addition to this there was, of course, the music of violin and piano.

The manufacture of the dresses required far more skill and art, it appears to me, than did the building of "The Royal Fear Not Palace and Opera House".

But not only dresses and scenery, but the play itself was put on the boards at last, and pronounced a complete success. It ran for twenty days, and then came a libretto and a farce, then something else, and so on, and so forth. Between each act, in the good old-fashioned style, songs, both comic and sentimental, were sung, and often, too, exhibitions of skill in athletics—such as Indian club exercise—would be given by one of the men. Dancing was not forgotten in the hall.

Nights were set apart especially for this latter, with little comic interacts and songs. The dancing was confined to

jigs, hornpipes, and strathspeys, and the man who could not have danced to the mad, merry music of Donaldson's fiddle and the piano, would have been very stiff and stupid indeed.

During these merry meetings in the palace, which took place at least three times a week, coffee and tea were served out in abundance.

But, independent of evening entertainments, Reynolds, whenever the weather permitted, encouraged all kinds of athletic games and sports upon the ice. They had races, and jumping, high leap, close-foot leap, vaulting with the pole, hop-step-and-jump, putting the stone, and throwing the heavy hammer and the light. Also shooting at the target.

And one day every week was devoted to a match or trial of skill, always providing that the day was clear and starry. Prizes were offered for competition by both Reynolds and Lord Daybreak, so that on match days there was no end of fun and excitement.

There was the greatest fun, perhaps, got out of the sack race and the obstruction race, in both of which Olaf and Svolto usually carried away the highest honours.

Another strange competition had been invented by Joe himself, who was one of the principal competitors, too. It only took place on bright, moonlight nights, and consisted in a blindfold march towards an object at a distance, say, of 150 yards. This walk or race—though time was no object—became a great favourite, and it was exceedingly droll, to the onlookers at all events. For seldom did a competitor ever reach within yards of the goal; some would bear away to the right, some to the left; on several occasions, indeed, a man would keep bearing to the right until he had completed a circle round the ship, coming back, to his own utter astonishment, at the very place from which he started.

Shooting with the rifle was a rather puzzling trial of skill, owing to the uncertain light. Usually a bottle was stuck on top of a hummock, and the competitors fired at that; but even Olaf, who was by far and away the best shot in the ship, failed to break the bottle five tries out of six.

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One evening towards the end of March, Reynolds, between the acts of one of Colin's plays, took possession of the rostrum.

"I am just standing here," he said, "so that I may be better seen, for I would not think of taking up your pleasant time by making a dry-as-dust speech."

"Boys," he continued, "I'm as pleased as Punch, not to put too fine a point on it, that you have all been so good. And, on the whole, I think the time has flown very quickly indeed."

"Hear, hear!" and "Hurrah!"

"Why, men, we'll soon have the sun back again to greet us."

"Hurrah! for the jolly old sun!"

"Yes, and we've been healthy, too. So healthy, indeed, that our worthy medico complains that he has not had a case worth treating. To speak the truth, his only patients have been the dogs. I am sorry to say that we have lost five in all; but our good doctor has cured all the rest; for, whatever the disease was from which they suffered—"

"Influenza borealis," interrupted Rudland, much to everybody's amusement.

"Well, anyhow, Dr. Rudland Syme has proved himself a good man and a gentleman, for he has not considered it beneath the dignity of the noble profession to which he belongs to minister to the ailments and ease the sufferings of our dear, dumb friends."

"Hear! hear! Three cheers for Dr. Rudland Syme!"

The doctor received his cheers—hearty ones they were—and bowed his thanks.

"Well, men," continued Reynolds, "let me thank you all for having spent the winter in a spirit so thoroughly cheerful and Christian-like, and I have now only one announcement to make, but I feel sure it will give you joy. Paddy in the song, you know, while describing his voyage from Dublin to Cork in a steamboat, declared to his friend, that though

"All the time he was standing stock-still,
Yet all the while he was moving'.

And as with Paddy, so it has been with us. Though fires are out in the engine-room, though the machinery has been standing stock-still, and never a stitch of canvas set to woo the wind, yet all the while we have been moving.

"And I can tell you, or my good mate, Joseph, yonder, can tell you, that we have been carried onwards and northwards by the irresistible force of the current, and that we are at this moment two hundred and fifty miles nearer to the Pole than on the day we were first beset in this great wilderness of ice. This is no great record, I confess. It gives us but little over two miles a day. But when the summer returns, and the ice opens far away beyond the Pole and near to the islands of Jan Mayen and Iceland; when stream after stream is detached from the main pack in those latitudes that we all know so well, then will our floating rate of speed be far greater, and long before the summer is over and the sun begins to set again, I trust in heaven that the British flag will wave in triumph over the very Pole itself."

"Hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!"

And the hall of the Ice Palace rang back that lusty cheer from its strangely beautiful vaulted roof.

This roof inside was indeed gorgeous now, for the heat of the stoves had sufficed to melt enough of it to form icicles, and these hung down in all directions, sparkling,—crimson, green, or blue,—in the lamplight.

The captain stepped down from the stage, but his little speech had done much good. He had raised hope in the hearts of his men, and this hope would assuredly bear fruit in the shape of additional health.

And they would need all of it they could possess, for verily their greatest trials were yet to come.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BLACK DEATH.

WITH this chapter the curtain rises on the last act of our tale. The last act, I say, but an act that will be crowded with many a strange scene, and some of them, alas! sad enough. Gladly, indeed, would I mitigate the sadness or delete it entirely, but to do so would be to lay only half the truth before the reader; for, ah me! the stories that come to us year after year of the splendid courage of our northern explorers are ever fraught with sorrow and with grief.

The long, dreary night of Arctic winter wore away at last. And I may add that it had been spent, on the whole, very pleasantly indeed.

Just as he went away, or retired, so did the sun return, with the same splendour of sky-colouring, and with the promise of long, bright days to come.

Much poetical feeling and much magnificent language has been expended—I must not say wasted—by authors in describing the rapture with which those who have been frozen up all winter in the icy north hail the return of the king of day. My own heroes all undoubtedly welcomed the sun's first appearance with joy and with shouts, as they clustered high in the rigging and crowded the nest. But the intensity of their joy was in some degree lessened by the thought that the sun must shine all the summer long, and sink and rise again before he could bring to their hearts the hope of speedily reaching their homes.

And what a long time it did seem to look forward to! Well, the best plan they could adopt for shortening the time was not to think about it at all.

"What is the good," said Olaf, "of one's worrying one's self over anything in the world, anyhow? Look how happy

the cat is yonder. She doesn't worry, nor wonder either, but just takes things as they come."

The night of Arctic winter wore away then, but not, of course, the winter itself, for, as an Irish member of the crew once said, "Winter stays on all summer in the polar regions."

So it does; but it was very pleasant, nevertheless, to have the sun back. It was even more pleasant to find out, as Captain Reynolds soon did, that with the quickly-increasing length of days, the drifting progress was being increased, and that the great ice-ocean was still floating due north towards the Pole.

Sledging was soon commenced now. It was right that they should be most perfect in sleigh-drill, as the captain called it. And since the spring snows had fallen—terrible storms some of these had been—the floes or floe-bergs, previously only joined together by bay-ice, were levelled up as to their divisions by drifts, and so the whole country appeared to be one unbroken surface.

Remember this, however, reader, that such a state of ice in the polar regions is not one that can exist for any very great length of time, for if a swell comes rolling in from seaward the bay ice between the bergs is, of course, ground up, or crushed under, or thrown over the heavy ice, and the snow on top of it becomes slush.

Many of these sledging excursions were very pleasant, and our heroes soon regained the healthy colour in their faces that the darkness had entirely deprived them of, having substituted for rosy cheeks and well-tanned skins a sickly yellow hue. As they got rosier again in complexion they got happier in heart, and all throughout their excursions laughing and joking and singing were constantly heard.

"No sport, that's the worst of it!"

That was a lament from Olaf.

"O, wouldn't I give something to see a bear!" he added.

"Well," said Reynolds by way of comforting him perhaps, "you must keep your mind easy and live in hope. There is no saying what we may not see yet. Why, Olaf, you may meet a mammoth some day when we get farther north, you know."

"Or a megatherium," said Colin.

"Well," laughed Reynolds, "I don't think that is very likely."

"And if I did meet a mammoth, it would very likely be a dead one. No sport in that."

"Well, no," said Joseph; "but you know if we could find one well preserved in the ice, we could skin him and stuff him and take him home."

"And sell him to Barnum," suggested Rudland Syme.

"Not for Joe," said Joseph. "I would stick to the darling till I made my fortune."

"Then," said Colin, "you could sell it cheap to Rudland Syme, and he could make his. He wouldn't have to depend upon his old gum-lancet any more."

"Well, gentlemen," put in Sigurd naïvely as he relit his pipe, for this was an after-dinner conversation, "I have never seen the bird myself."

"No," said Reynolds laughing, "you were born too late in the day, my friend, to see the bird. Besides, the bird happens to be, or to have been, a beast."

"A kind of elephant, Sigurd," he continued, "that ages agone lived in the very far north of Europe, and at a time when no doubt trees and forests flourished even in the polar regions—which, however, might not have been precisely polar in those days. This elephant was of immense size, as their carcasses, found even to this day frozen in the ice, testify. Some must have been about ten feet high at the shoulder, and twenty feet long from the jaws to the tail. These huge, ungainly monsters must have wandered through the forests of the north, feeding chiefly on the leaves and twigs of trees. Their tusks were of very great length, and bent upwards in more than half a circle. These hook-like tusks would enable them to break down the branches and thus supply themselves with food, for of course these noble animals were vegetable-feeders. What are you laughing to yourself about, Olaf?"

"For the time being I could not help fancying I saw a real live mammoth at the Zoo—your grand English Zoo, I mean—towering above all the other elephants, his head

tossed high in air, his curled tusks held proudly aloft, dwarfing even Jumbo who stands next him; bold, fearless, wise, but affectionate withal, for, see, he bends low for a moment and extends a trunk like the limb of an oak towards an innocent child held up by its nurse to place a sweet therein—a tiny little lollipop it is, so small that the mammoth will scarce be able to taste it, and yet, to please the child, he delicately conveys it to his mouth and makes pretence to enjoy it."

"Olaf!" said Colin, "I believe, after all, there is a little vein of poetry in your nature—at times."

"O, it is always there," said Olaf; "only it is so far down that it takes a long rod to stir it up."

"Men," said Reynolds one morning at breakfast—it was all morning now, however, or rather it was all day, for the sun would not set again for months—"men, rejoice with me! We are within three hundred miles of the Pole. Will it not be a glorious day for us all when the Union Jack floats on the spot where east meets west, where north is no more and all is south beneath us?"

"Glorious!" said Colin and Joe both in one breath.

Just then Rudland Syme came in and sat down. He was looking somewhat abstracted, not to say care-worn.

"What!" cried Reynolds, "is our good old medico off his feed?"

Rudland smiled, mechanically one might say, and, receiving his plate from Henry the steward, placed it before him, and began toying with his knife and fork.

"I'm puzzled, Captain Reynolds. And you'll be sorry to hear what I have to say."

"Come," said Reynolds. "Calling me Captain Reynolds sounds official."

"Yes, sir; I mean my communication to be so considered. I have been up all night with the dogs that you know were ailing yesterday."

"And they are better, of course?"

"They are better, no doubts, but—they are dead."

"Dead?"

"Yes, three in all. Dead and buried in the snow. Chauss's wife is among the number, and Chauss and Lakoff and even the boy Svolto are inconsolable."

"And what is the disease?"

"That I can scarcely inform you. In Britain they would call it 'the yellows'; but it is a most dreadful form of the complaint. I made a post-mortem on one, and found the liver almost quite disintegrated."

"'The yellows', is it?"

"I did not say so. I would go further, and say Yellow Jack."

"Doctor, don't frighten us."

"I must go further still, I fear, and say—"

"What?"

"The Black Death!"

The Black Death! A chill seemed to strike cold and icy to the heart of everyone who sat at the table. Sigurd let fall his knife and fork. Joe stared with open mouth.

But it was the blanched look of terror in Sigurd's face that attracted most attention.

All eyes were turned towards him.

"Sigurd," said Reynolds slowly, hesitatingly—he was about to ask for the truth, yet apparently dreaded to hear it—"Sigurd, you, with your vast experience, know something of the Black—"

He paused. The words were such ominous ones he did not like to use them. "Of this strange disease," he added.

Sigurd's eyes were fixed upon the compass that swung overhead, and as he answered he seemed speaking more to himself than to anyone else.

"It was out in the Bay of Baffin. We called it Baffin's Sea. Our ship was the *Godhaab*. Far beyond Disko we had sailed, for the ice was strangely open that year. Our voyage was already a good one. We should have been content. 'A few more whales. Just three white whales', our skipper said, 'and then southward we will sail to Bergen, where our wives and sweethearts wait our return with longing eyes and prayers'."

"One moment, Sigurd," said Olaf. "This is a story you have never even told to me?"

"No, because of its sadness."

"But one question more, then. Was the skipper my poor father?"

"No, boy, no; I was not then with your father. I was but a child or little more."

"Proceed."

"Reikjav, as we called him, was an Eskimo. He came with us from Godhaven in Disko Isle. Reikjav and his two dogs—a brave and wise harpooner was this Eskimo. Many a whale he had struck and speared ere then. Of his courage, indeed, there was no end. But he would not come without his dogs. North and north went we, but, alas! no white whale was seen. O, it was not Reikjav's fault. Yet when the frost fell, and we knew we were beset for all the darksome winter, our skipper grew red and angry, and much he abused poor Reikjav. Reikjav only put his hand to his face and bent low his head. Then our angry skipper struck him, and blood stained the snow on the deck. Reikjav sobbed like a child, and staggered forward. I think I see him now. I think I hear his sobs as he lay between his two dogs near the bowsprit. Next morning there was no Reikjav. He seemed taken by spirits of the air. Only the dogs sat there and howled by the ice hole! Their master could not stand the disgrace of that blow. In there he had dropped, and the current had done the rest."

"Go on, Sigurd, although your tale is a melancholy one."

"In one night both dogs died—it was the Black Death. Then man after man. Ah! I must be brief. It was all too terrible. Because captain and mate took drink, drink, drink. Then there was mutiny, and all the spirits were emptied on the snow. Then death again—death, death, death. Captain and mate went first."

"Gentlemen," continued Sigurd, "when we were first beset we were twenty-nine all told, when the spring sun showed his face we were but seven—only seven, and the ship went down!"

"But the ice opened, and we on our floes went floating south. Cold, starvation, frost-bite. Then to me was all forgetfulness."

"How many of the seven were saved, Sigurd?"

"How many? Not many. Only me!"

There was very little further conversation that morning at table.

Captain Reynolds was the first to rise. He looked at Rudland, and Rudland followed him into the after-cabin. Reynolds pointed to a seat. "Doctor, there is danger? Danger to us all; I mean—to men and dogs?" he added.

"True, sir, true."

"Well, now, if I am wrong put me right—is not one half the danger mental in its origin?"

"It is," said Syme; "and I am glad, sir, you recognize that fact."

"Very well, having grasped this, am I right now or wrong in saying that in exercise both for dogs and men, employment, I mean—and we must make it as pleasant as possible—lies our chief hope of averting a terrible evil?"

"One of our hopes, at all events, sir. We have two more, medicine and regimen."

"We will begin at once then."

"I have begun my part. I have set the men to work on a snow igloo for the sickly or suspected dogs, I have changed the position of the kennels on board, I have ordered an extra supply of medicated lime-juice for all hands, and I have altered the men's diet somewhat—and rationally, I trust."

"Well done, Syme! You're a good fellow! You have at once taken the bull by the horns. Now I'll do my part."

"That is right. And whatever is done must be done at once. So now, Captain, I'm off forward again."

When Reynolds, long before breakfast that day, had betaken himself to the crow's nest to have his customary look round, he had discovered far away to the north-east what he at first thought was a rising cloud. He went straight up into the nest again now. The cloud was still there.

It had altered neither in size nor in position. The cloud was a mountain!

"On deck there, Joe!"

"That's me, sir," cried Joseph, looking up.

"Land on the starboard bow!"

"Land, sir?"

"Yes, mate; come and see."

The news spread through the ship like wildfire. Dog sickness, black death—everything was forgotten. Land! What a delightful sound had the word—Land? What a delicious ring there was about it? Land? Why, they had not seen land for a hundred years, to judge from their feelings.

But when the captain gave an order, and Sigurd followed it up by rushing forward, beating the deck with his heavy foot and shouting "Away dogs, and boat, and sledges," then the excitement was intense.

The land must be fully thirty miles away, so it would be a long and toilsome journey. Never mind, it was a journey with a purpose. That purpose was to raise the spirits of officers and men, and to drive from their minds all thoughts of sickness or of coming evil.

I might say, indeed, that the purpose was a double or triple one, for the journey would drill the men in the dragging of boats and sledges over ice and snow, and it would give Reynolds an opportunity of making observations that would be useful from a scientific point of view.

Sleeping-bags were taken, plenty of food for dogs and men, and a plentiful allowance of coffee and tea, with a modicum of medicine, including spirits.

The cook and one man, besides the doctor and Svolto, were all that were left behind, so that, in a measure, the ship was deserted.

The dogs were soon in harness, and glad they seemed to be to get off. Lakoff's little whip cracked loudly on the still air, a cheer was raised, and away bounded the expedition. The light boats had been placed on runners, so that as long as the surface of the ice was smooth it was possible to go dashing onwards at a wonderful speed.

Cæsar and Keltie were the only dogs who did no work, but the noble Newfoundland considered himself in command of the whole caravan, and Keltie was his first lieutenant.

Reynolds, Sigurd, and our two younger heroes were on skier, each singly, but all the others—including, of course, Donaldson and Jones also—wore snow-shoes, but gladly assisted the dogs in their task whenever they came to an uneven surface.

Fifteen miles were covered that day, and after that rest and sleep became imperative. There was no wind, so it was not considered necessary to erect a tent. Supper was soon discussed. Then everybody turned in, though not to sleep. The bags were so arranged that all could lie and talk. Those who did not smoke drank coffee. As for the sledge dogs, they huddled together all in a heap, with the exception of Chauss, who snuggled up in his master's arms under a bear-skin rug in one of the boats.

Before going to sleep that night, there was a good deal of talk about the probable character of the ice they should fall in with about or around the Pole. Reynolds, of course, was the chief speaker, although he listened with great deference to the opinions of Sigurd.

"I cannot quite get that big word beginning with a 'P' to stick to my memory," said Sigurd, or words to that effect. "But," he added, "I don't altogether hold with the doctrine of a very heavy and immovable ice-cap."

"You refer to palæocrystic ice?" put in Reynolds.

"That is the word, sir. But I know that some believe that the Pole for hundreds of miles is one gigantic ice-cap parting now and then with huge masses or islands of ice which they call floe-bergs, such as have been met with to the far north of Greenland and elsewhere."

"Yes," said Reynolds, "it is right, Sigurd, to say elsewhere, because the shallowness of the sea prevents their floating everywhere. They would ground and disintegrate or fall to pieces, these pieces floating over the banks and finding their way south."

"Certainly, sir; but no gravel has been found attached to these island-floes, and hence they argue that they are portions of the ancient ice of immense thickness, and not parts broken off from the glaciers that have come from some shore."

"But," he continued, "is the want of gravel proof positive

that such is the case. For, sir, would not an island of ice, floating for some time, part with its bottom gravel?"

"Well, Sigurd, we don't know all the mysteries of the polar regions yet, and a deal of talk that we hear in England, about the formation of the various forms of ice is mere theory or conjecture. But my opinion is this, and it will be rough on all of us if I am not right, that ice does float from the latitudes—say of the New Siberian Islands—right across the Pole; and that though, for instance, the very floe in which our good ship is now enhaboured may, no doubt, increase in thickness during next winter, it will not become any portion of a real floe-berg or ice-island."

"And these ice-islands, sir?"

"These islands of ice, Joe—though I speak with all due deference to the opinions of others—may be detached portions of glaciers after all."

"Do you hint at the probability," said Colin, "of land around the Pole?"

Reynolds laughed.

"You read my very thoughts," he said.

"We may not," he added, "meet with any very large continent. For whatever may have existed in the shape of a continent in ages long gone by, may, and doubtless is, now cut up into islands. The sea-currents act on continents, Colin. Fjords become deeper and deeper till they cut their way from shore to shore; then your continent becomes a series of islands."

"True, sir."

"But I think, men, that a mighty floe-berg may be formed in a crush or jam among ice. The Lord Himself, and He only, can calculate the terrible force of an ice crush, if the onward flow of a pack meets with resistance in the shape of land. We have all seen bay ice and pancake ice heaped up on the top of floes in a pack to form high hummocks, and we have seen larger ice broken up into boulders in a crush, but this was but in an ordinary jam such as sealers are subjected to often enough when a swell rolls in from the ocean. It is different with ice jams in regions farther north of the latitudes in which we now rest."

We have all the currents behind us, and—what have we ahead? This is a question we cannot as yet answer. But we are going on to see."

"Do you think, sir," said Sigurd, "there is any chance of us meeting with an open sea around the Pole?"

"I think, my good friend Sigurd, that this open sea is a mere myth. It is believed in by many sealing skippers and whalers, but not, I think, by any truly scientific man."

"The sealers say that there must be such an open sea"—this from Joe—"because in early summer we meet the seals in high latitudes coming south to pup, and because, as we all know, when their puppies are old enough to look after themselves, the female seals rejoin the male, and all go northwards again together to the open sea around the Pole."

"O, yes," said Sigurd; "and my countrymen, you must know, go further still in their theory, and believe that not only is there open water around the Pole, but green islands, birds, beasts, and vegetation."

"Yes, true, Sigurd," laughed Reynolds; "and the notion is a very pretty one. Fancy, boys, a land of flowers in the frozen ocean. Islands that, seen from the blue sea, hang like emerald fairy-lands on the horizon; islands on whose shores of silvery sand peaceful waves are breaking; islands covered with woods and wilds and waving forests, in which many a bright-winged bird is singing, and through which float butterfly, moth, and beetle ten times more radiant and lovely than any ever met with in the tropics, while fruits the most luscious bend the branches of the trees earthwards, and flowers rich and rare nod over many a purling brook and stream."

"Ah," said Colin, "I shall go to sleep right away and dream about that."

"It must be on islands such as these," Olaf thought, "that the mammoth still roves and roams."

"Yes, Olaf, if the land of flowers exists at all around the Pole, I have no hesitation in saying you will find the mammoth there."

"But good-night all, and pleasant dreams."

"Good-night."

CHAPTER VII.

THE SEA OF CHAOS—AT THE POLE ITSELF—GOD SAVE
THE QUEEN!

FOR many miles farther the little expedition was continued without finding ice that was difficult to cross, but towards dinner-time on the second day they encamped on the edge of a pack that gave ample evidence that here the most gigantic forces of nature had been at work.

At first Reynolds hesitated as to whether he should advance even another mile. Indeed, when all his companions were sound asleep that night, he lay long awake considering the matter. Why should he not himself explore a little way? This was a thought that crossed his mind about midnight. The sun was shining very brightly, and there was not a breath of wind. Indeed, the weather was almost warm.

So he slipped quietly out of his bag, and, without waking anyone, took his way towards the sea of rugged ice. He did not go alone, however—at least not quite—for he soon heard stealthy footsteps behind him, and, looking back, beheld both Cæsar and Keltie.

Their ears were on their necks, and they looked most pleadingly up in his face.

“Please may we come?” that was the question they seemed to ask.

“O certainly come!” that was the answer.

I have no language in which to describe this sea of icy boulders. Even a photograph would not suffice to depict it. Chaos! That was its name. Reynolds, after walking for a time over or through it, climbed to the top of a high hummock—no, let me call it a frozen wave—and gazed around him. Chaos! Nothing else. The ruggedness had evidently been caused by a great ice-crush, in which floes or bergs had been broken into boulders, and bay and pancake ice raised into heaps and hillocks, now partially clad in

snow, till the whole looked as if Giant Frost had stretched out his glassy wand, touching a wind-tortured, storm-tossed sea of water, and changing it in one moment into ice.

Reynolds and the dogs went on and on for miles, but there was no improvement. High above him, though far away, rose high hills or mountains. That was an island, or the rocky cape of some continent, and the bold explorer determined that he would reach it.

Then he returned, and once more crept into the sleeping-bag. His slumbers were very sound now, and he was the very last to awaken in the morning.

When he told his people of his adventures of the previous night—his midnight wanderings in the sea of chaos—for a time they seemed incredulous, and thought it was but their captain's fun. Joe, indeed, was not quite convinced until he saw "with his own eyes", as he phrased it, the trail of dogs and man among the snow.

When the fearfully rough nature of the ice they soon encountered became known, Lord Daybreak counselled leaving boats and sledges behind, and even the dogs, but as this would have interfered with the drill he meant all hands to have, Reynolds would not consent.

"Well, Reynolds," said Daybreak after a time, "if we can overcome such a field of ice as this we need not fear anything."

"That is just it," said Reynolds. "I want to know what we can do, and if this battle with the ice and icy chaos does no other good, it will at anyrate give us confidence."

Dogs here, however, were practically of little use. It was nearly all lifting and carrying, quite as much as dragging.

Only four miles were accomplished that day, and then, tired and weary enough, they encamped in Chaos, as they continued to call it. And so it continued to be all next day, but at resting-time they found themselves close to the edge of what seemed a frozen fjord, for steep rocks rose at each side, and there was a glen, with high mountains at the far end.

"How can you account for this stretch of what at a very

recent period must have been open water?" said Daybreak.

"It is evident, I think," replied Reynolds, "that the crush that formed the sea of chaos took place farther round and against the rocks, and that Chaos worked round this way, and that, under our feet, lies a shallow bar. I will find out to-morrow."

An early start landward was made next day, but not before soundings had been taken. To their astonishment they found that the water here was barely five feet deep, and that the edge of the heavy ice was aground.

How delightful, how exhilarating, was the swift and dashing drive across the smooth, snow-clad fjord! Everyone was now in the very best of spirits, and the health of the dogs seemed to leave nothing to be desired. They went on their way singing and shouting, as if they had been a pack of school-boys off for a holiday.

The journey was but ten miles ere they struck the shore, and everybody was sorry it was not twenty. And now came the mid-day meal; then a long journey up the glen. But this landed them at the foot of the rugged white hills, so dinner was ordered. After dinner, the sleeping-bags, tobacco, tales, and songs, till sleeping time.

Up early next day, and then the Alpine party was formed. Daybreak and Jones both pleaded fatigue, but Donaldson, Colin, and Olaf were all ready and eager to accompany Reynolds. So, too, were Cæsar and Keltie, yet both were left behind.

Then the ascent was commenced. They took axes, ropes, and poles, and slung their *skier* across their backs.

With rifles they did not burden themselves. No living thing was here, no bird, no beast! No human being had ever trodden those wilds before! They were walking over the very grave of dead nature, and the mountain they began to climb was but the mound above it.

Excelsior! Our heroes really needed to take this word for their motto to-day. No more toilsome ascent was probably ever made. It was not one hill only they had to climb, but hills on hills, with wide straths, glaciers, and

uplands stretching between. But across these latter they *skilöbned*, only looking well out for crevasses, and of these they encountered many.

Excelsior! Yes, on and on, up and up, and the higher they mounted the more bitter grew the cold. But at long, long last they reached the summit of the highest hill, which the barometer told them was nearly 8000 feet above the sea-level.

They forgot the cold now, as, with their hoods tied across their faces, they stood there entranced, gazing on a scene such as probably was never before witnessed by eyes of man. As far as vision could reach to east, to west, to north, it was one unbroken, one dazzling prairie of snow-clad ice. "Unbroken", I have said; well, let the word stand, for as far as colour goes it is in a great measure correct. But the surface was not altogether a plain. No land could be descried towards the west, but eastwards and north rose on the horizon the rugged peaks of innumerable mountains.

Reynolds made many observations, which he duly entered in his note-book, although his gloved hands were almost frozen.

He smiled as he returned the book to his pocket, and turned to face his companions.

"I think you are satisfied, sir," said Colin, as well as he could speak, which, owing to the terrible cold and the cutting wind, was but indistinctly.

"I am. You see for yourselves that there is land; that there are islands innumerable here. I confess to you, though, that a load has been lifted off my mind. You see there is no appearance of land to the westward. How pleased I am. On that fact depends the success of our expedition."

"I don't quite understand," said Colin.

"I do," said Sigurd.

"Tell them, Sigurd."

"You see, Master Olaf, if the pack on which we are being floated towards the Pole—"

"And over it, Sigurd," put in Reynolds.

"Yes, and over it;—had, I was saying, this pack got between two islands, we should be jammed and crushed."

"But," Reynolds added, "the crush is relieved by sea expanse towards the west. And now, men, before we are frozen, let us make our feet our friends, and get downwards again to our camp as fast as we can."

Before commencing the descent, however, they had one more look around them, viewing more closely the island on which they stood. They named it the Isle of Chaos.

And surely no more rugged island exists in all the world. Had the summer been further advanced, the ascent of this mountain would have been found impossible. For everywhere in its glens, and even in the ridges between its highest hills, were vast expanses of snow-clad ice which in July would be water mixed with slush, while roaring streams would go tumbling down the hillsides, forming many a foaming cataract as they dashed onwards to the sea.

Reynolds and his party were very tired indeed when they got to camp that night. But tea revived them, and I would not venture to say how many cups of that refreshing beverage each made away with.

The conversation that night after they got into their bags was principally speculative, but Reynolds drew many a charming word picture of the beauty and luxuriance that this very island may have presented ages and ages ago.

No wonder, then, that when Olaf fell asleep at last he dreamt that he was riding through its wooded glens and straths, mounted on the back of a mammoth and shooting ichthyosauri.

This was not the only sledging tour, not by scores, I may say, that our heroes took, for all saw the advantages to be reaped from constant exercise and employment.

And where now was the Black Death? Gone. Gone for a time, at all events. One man, however, had died of the terrible plague, and several more dogs. The man had been a great favourite on board, and somehow the shadow of his untimely end seemed to linger on the minds of the crew all-

told of the *Fear Not*, through all the sunny brightness of the Arctic summer, and the long days of autumn.

But where were they now?

Well, if anything in this world was calculated to give hope, and to banish gloom and *ennui* right away to the Antarctic regions themselves, it was the discovery that at long, long last they had reached the Pole.

The days were already beginning to get shorter and colder, when to his crew one day Reynolds—pointing shorewards to where rocks and hills rose high against the pale blue Arctic sky—made this announcement.

It was received with the wildest cheers, cheers in which the very dogs seemed to, nay, did take part; Cæsar leading with his trumpet bay until the very rocks re-echoed back the sound.

Next day was a never-to-be-forgotten one. With the exception of Lakoff and Svolto all landed, and by noon above the very highest mountain floated and flew

“The royal standard of Britain the great”.

Once more the wildest cheering rent the air. The excitement, the enthusiasm, was intense, and for a time Reynolds stood there, his left arm grasping the flagstaff, attempting, but all in vain, to address his men.

For many minutes there was no chance of his voice being heard. But Joe's stentorian voice was raised at last.

“Silence, men!” he cried, “silence, comrades all! Listen to the captain's speech.”

The men obeyed, and all eyes were turned towards Reynolds. Then he said:

“Men, friends, I may say brothers, you look to me for a speech. But speech I have none to give. My heart is far too full for words, and any attempt at eloquence on my part would end in failure. I should break down. Yea, I might even shed tears, though they would be tears born of joy and of excitement. I and you, my friends, that cluster round me, stand here the representatives of the British nation, and we stand beside that flag on which the sun never sets—

“‘The flag that braved a thousand years
The battle and the breeze’.

"I thank you, men and brothers, for the confidence you have ever reposed in me, and my schemes. I thank you from my heart and soul that you have enabled me to attain the object of my ambition. Yes, men, I thank you; but above all let us thank the God above us, the God of all ends of the earth, who has guided us safely thus far, and who is able to take us in safety once more back to our native land if we but ask His mercy."

"Amen! Amen!"

And every head was bared, every eye turned upwards to the ethereal blue of the Arctic sky.

For some moments the silence was almost dread. It was the silence of space itself; a silence so complete one might almost hear a snow-flake fall.

It was broken at last by the voice of Reynolds himself.

"Here are no stones," he said, "but let us heap up a cairn of ice and snow around our flag. The flag itself may be, and will be, tattered and rent by winters' storms, in time the staff itself will totter and fall; but our cairn will, perhaps, remain for generations to show the pluck and perseverance of Britannia's sons."

In less than two hours the cairn was raised, and raised above a box containing documents descriptive of the most remarkable voyage and journey ever made by mortal man.

"Now," cried Reynolds, "one cheer more and then for Britain's hymn."

Svolto told Sigurd afterwards that in the stillness of the air, not only could he hear the music, but the very words of the grand old anthem; and that both he and Lakoff had uncovered their heads and stood with eyes turned hillwards till the very last line died away in cadence—

"God save the Queen".

CHAPTER VIII.

SAD DEATH OF LORD DAYBREAK—STRANGE AND FEARFUL ADVENTURES.

MANY months have gone by since we saw, though but with the mind's eye, the grand old flag of our own dear native land floating at the Pole.

Weary months those have been, months of sad anxiety to all on board the *Fear Not*, but more especially to the bold leader of this expedition. Even the very best and cleverest of men, it must be remembered, are apt to make mistakes. If Reynolds had a fault,—and who among us is there that has not,—it lay in his being somewhat oversanguine. In this strange venture of his—this attempt to cross the Pole by attaching himself to a floe which he firmly believed would float him across—we cannot help thinking that he left a little too much to chance; and now that a reverse—or, as poor Joe, his sincerest friend, called it, a hitch—had come, Reynolds was indeed in trouble.

I must do him the credit of saying that for his own life he cared but little. It was no fear of personal death that led to his grief. Could he have saved his people, could he have restored them to their own country safe and sound, with the gladsome news that the Pole had been discovered, right willingly would he have laid him down by yonder great ice hummock and died. But Fate would make no such compact with him. He had trusted to chance; he must suffer therefore, and with him all his crew must suffer.

And now, let us see wherein these sufferings lay, and how and when they began.

In a few weeks time, then, the *Fear Not* in its floe harbour had drifted away from the island on which the standard had been raised. But what seemed strange now to Reynolds and others was the fact that the rate of progress southwards was not so great as it had formerly

been. Had the current then lost its power? No, this was not so, as observation after observation fully proved.

There was only one conclusion to arrive at therefore, on this point all were agreed, there must be a jam some distance farther south. A force resisting the pressure of the floating floes, resisting the endeavours of the great ice-field to find its way farther south.

Daybreak and Joe and Sigurd gave each their views upon the matter.

Reynolds listened respectfully, then said:

"There must be an exceedingly large island directly south of us. We are now many degrees to the west of the meridian."

"Yes," said Joe, "ten degrees at least."

"Well, if this current continued to flow as it does, and there was no obstruction, we should expect it to bring us straight along by the eastern shores of Greenland, and we might reach open water some distance north of Iceland, between that island and Jan Mayen."

"When I went myself," said Lord Daybreak, "to the nest this forenoon, I thought I could perceive mountains far to the south."

"Yes," said Reynolds, "so did I. They looked like small islands, but this would hardly account for the obstruction. Sigurd, what is your opinion?"

Sigurd spoke slowly, as he usually did, and the gist of his reply to Reynolds, couched in somewhat better English than he used, was as follows:

"My opinion, sir? That as ages roll on the formation of the land in these seas is getting changed. A great battle is being waged, and has been raging for countless years 'twixt earth and sea. Old islands are being gradually washed away, continents are becoming islands, and islands are eventually reduced to mere rocks or bluffs so small as to be taken sometimes for icebergs. In all this the sea seems to have the best of it. But, sir, the land is not lost. It is washed away, but only to form sand-banks, that will in time become islands, new islands, perhaps even new continents. And, gentlemen, the first work in the progress

of their construction is the formation of these banks, in which the water is shoal and over which heavy ice cannot float but is bound to jam."

"As sure as I live, sir," cried Joe, "Seabird has it. There is far more in that old nut of his than, judging only from his droll, old figure-head, one would give him credit for."

"Joe, my friend," said Reynolds, "you seem inclined to be merry. Well, I don't want to damp your spirits; but even supposing Sigurd is right, and that our floe-ice is being stopped in its progress by shoal water, I don't quite see that such knowledge helps us out of our difficulty."

"I quite understand, sir. Well; we must wait and see."

They did wait. They waited a week, with only this result: they discovered that the floe in which they were harboured had in some unaccountable way altered its position somewhat. The *Fear Not's* bows were no longer pointing directly south, but south and east. The current, too, was changed. Was it about to sweep round, our mariners wondered, and return to the Pole? This was a question that for the present could not be answered.

Meanwhile, the days had by this time got very short indeed.

"Reynolds," said Lord Daybreak one morning at breakfast, "I do not think it would be a bad plan to go on a sledge-journey now, southwards for a few miles, and take soundings."

"That is a good idea," said Reynolds, "and from a scientific point of view it will be profitable."

"Let us start at once. To tell you the truth, gentlemen," he said, looking round the table, "I feel in a somewhat depressed condition, mentally, to-day. I think a run out will do me good." This from Lord Daybreak.

"The liver, no doubt," said Rudland.

"I think not. I feel, doctor, as if some dark shape were sitting on my grave!"

"He, he!" laughed Syme. "Your grave isn't dug yet."

"Figuratively speaking," said Daybreak; "no sooner is a baby born than death hurries away to dig his grave."

Long before the stars had set, or become dimmed before the light of approaching day, the sledges were harnessed, and speeding southwards and west across the sea of ice.

When five miles had been accomplished a place was reached at which the ice was light and low, and here the first tapping was made and a sounding taken.

No one was astonished to find that the water was but eight fathoms deep. At another place still farther south, it was more shallow still. Many more soundings were taken, and it was evident that they were standing over a great bank, and that this it must be which caused the obstruction to the ice-floe.

At every place where a sounding was taken, specimens of the deposit at the bottom were secured, so that before all the operations were completed, the short autumn day had worn to a close, and stars were out and shining.

A very beautiful display of aurora brightened and shortened the long and somewhat dreary night considerably.

Every one was up, and breakfast was got ready at an early hour.

"Wake Lord Daybreak," said Reynolds. "He would persist in sleeping by himself last night."

Olaf went towards the sledge. Lord Daybreak's bag was cold and empty! Nor was he to be found anywhere. Strangely enough, too, Cæsar had likewise disappeared.

With feelings that may well be imagined our Arctic heroes now waited with great impatience the return of dawn. Then the trail was found. Found and followed. Westward it went first, that trail of dog and man, then in a direct line north and east, as if his lordship had made an attempt to reach the ship.

On and on they followed it for two long miles. Meanwhile the sky had become darkened, and snow began to fall, but not enough to hide the trail.

They had not gone very much farther when the quick ears of Olaf Ranna detected the pitiful and mournful howling of poor Cæsar. He ran forward, disappearing a minute after in the mist of the snowfall. When his companions came up with him at last they found him standing by an

ice-hole, apparently petrified with grief. The trail went no further.

This untimely death deepened the gloom that had already begun to spread over the ship, and that, do what he might, Reynolds found it impossible to dispel.

The death of Lord Daybreak under such sad circumstances seemed but the beginning of the end.

Meanwhile, the sea of ice went slowly floating onwards, and with it the *Fear Not*. To Reynolds' great joy the course, as well as the current, had again changed, and the vessel's head was now pointed south as before, and the rate of progress was about four miles a day. Nothing could be much more satisfactory than this; and although the sun had set to rise not again for many a long and dreary month to come, Reynolds felt certain in his own mind, and he assured his messmates, that the returning spring would see them very far south indeed, and that ere next summer had departed they would be safe and sound once more in their own native land.

At sea, however, there is nothing certain save the unforeseen. So said Nelson; and his words are proved by the adventures that now befell the *Fear Not* and her crew.

The first of these adventures was a very strange one. For one whole month the ship had been enveloped in total darkness. Storm after storm had raged across the polar ice-fields. The snow was so blinding, and so constant in its downfall, that the vessel was almost completely covered. It was with the utmost difficulty that they could keep clear a passage to their snow palace on the neighbouring floe.

Reynolds, however, encouraged his people to do so, and all the games and amusements that were inaugurated on the previous winter were once again carried out, though, I must add, with far less heart and spirit.

But exercise meant life. Without it the *ennui* that was gathering over the ship's crew, like an awful mental cloud, might increase to an epidemic of monomania. Indeed, this *ennui* has ere now reached the stage of furious madness.

So plays and concerts were got up and given thrice every

week, though, it must be confessed, the master hand of Day-break was sadly missed at the piano.

It was towards the end of that long month of total darkness and storm, that one night all hands were awakened by noises in the ice far ahead that were as difficult to explain as they were dreadful to listen to. At the same time the roar as of some terrible explosion was heard now and then close at hand, and more than once this was accompanied by a slight upheaval of the floe and a quivering of the ship from stem to stern.

The noises ahead increased rather than diminished, as hour after hour went past. They were those of rending, crashing, and grinding, mingled with the usual shrieking and groaning and wild wailing never absent from an ice-crush in the Arctic seas. But not even Sigurd himself had ever heard sounds so appalling as those which were now not only ahead, but on both sides of the apparently doomed ship.

A strange, undefinable kind of terror took possession of the crew, which the intensity of the darkness outside, and the ever-falling snow did not tend to lessen. The wind, too, had arisen, and to its roaring was added the terrified baying of the dogs, which all the arts of Lakoff and Svolto could not restrain.

Meanwhile, the ice-dust sifted in through every cranny of the canopy tent, and latterly it was impossible for anyone even to show head on the upper deck without the imminent danger of almost instant suffocation. For, as explained by Rudland Syme to his messmates, the breathing of this ice-dust causes spasm of the air-cells and tubuli of the lungs stronger than that of asthma itself.

In about six hours' time the noises ceased, and silence, save for the moaning of the wind, once more reigned all over the dismal pack.

But the snow continued to fall.

Every time has an end, however, even the saddest and most wearisome, and one morning, to their intense joy and satisfaction, our heroes awoke to find only quiet and stillness

all around, and the sea of ice lit up with a glorious flood of moonlight and starshine.

Sea of ice! But was this the sea of ice? If so, how strange and weird the change that had been wrought upon it!

As quickly as the slipperiness of the ice-bound rigging would permit, Reynolds and Olaf—Colin would not dare—climbed as high as the main-topgallant cross-trees and gazed wonderingly around them.

The ship was in a fjord. Yes, this was evident. She had been crushed in here by the force of the ice pack. About a mile ahead was the shore—the foot of a glen, perhaps, for high hills rose, towering into the star-lit sky on each side of it—yes, that was the shore, but such a shore! It looked like the ice-foot of some mighty glacier, and was built up of the débris of a thousand ice-floes that had been smashed into boulders and piled upon the land.

"Slip down below, Olaf," said Reynolds; "you're lighter and younger than I am. Tell Sigurd to come aloft."

In a few minutes Sigurd stood by his captain's side.

"Well, my friend, what think you of this?" said the captain. "Here is a change indeed."

Sigurd didn't answer just for a moment. He gazed on shore at that terrible ice bank. He looked to the right and to the left at the tall and beetling cliffs.

Then Sigurd did what I daresay a good many sailors have done before him when in difficulty of any sort. He took from his pocket a stick of tobacco and bit a huge hunk off it.

"Well, Sigurd, what think you of the situation?"

"Well, sir, as far as the situation goes, it is a permanent one."

"You think, then, the ship is doomed?"

"Think. No, I don't think, sir. It needs no thought. Yes, the *Fear Not* is a lost ship. Look you here, sir. Gaze away astern there. Are there ice-saws big enough in all the world to hue a canal through a pack like that. Could all the gunpowder we have on board ever blast those ice-rocks? No, sir, no, nor all the nitro-glycerine in Europe, could it be all discharged at once."

"Meanwhile the current goes sweeping on," said Reynolds. "Sigurd, we must reach that current again, and be borne along once more southward on the floes."

"True, sir, true. But we'll have to leave the ship behind."

Great afflictions swamp little minds; they but strengthen the souls of heroes. Reynolds rose to the difficulties of his terrible situation. He was not going to be beaten, and the brief speech he made to his people that day when he gathered them together on the quarter-deck, was the boldest and brightest he had yet given voice to.

He told them everything. He explained to them the position in which the ice crush had landed them; he admitted that the ship was doomed; that when spring returned, they must leave her. They must take to the boats; and if the boats must be abandoned, then they must trust as far as possible to the sledges, and if the worst comes to the worst—

He stopped.

"Yes—what then, sir?" cried the men.

"Why," he shouted in reply, "we will navigate an ice-floe when we come to the open water, and that shall float us safely south to regions where we are bound to meet with sealers and with ships."

"Hurrah!" the men shouted in answer to this brave speech. Joe sprang up to the top of the skylight, and waved his cap aloft.

"Messmates and men," he cried; "that isn't half a hurrah! It is but a poor half-hearted attempt at cheering. There is fear in your hearts, and it is a superstitious one; fling it off, men. Be men in reality. I am not going to let down my heart. I have a little sweetheart far away in bonnie Scotland, and I am going back to marry her. I am as certain of that as I am that the moon is shining over the sea of ice. And some of you have sweethearts, and nearly all have sisters or mothers. For their sakes let us be brave. For their sakes let us stick together, and do or die. Cheerily does it, lads. Cheerily, O! Now, let me hear a slight im-

provement on your last feeble and school-boyish hurrah. Shout, boys, shout!"

And shout they did, and it was a shout that came straight away from every heart.

"Bravo!" cried Donaldson. "A man's a man for a' that.

"Now, then," he continued, "I feel I want exercise. Ship the capstan-bars, boys, and let us trot around and grind a little more electric light."

The light, I may mention, had been ground in this way since ever they were frozen in.

Right merrily, then, the capstan went round, while bold Donaldson raised high his song, the ringing Russel-music kept time to by the beating of the—

"Cheer, boys, cheer! No more of idle sorrow,
Courage, true hearts, shall bear us on our way;
Hope flies before and points the bright to-morrow,
Let us forget the dangers of to-day."

CHAPTER IX.

THE "FEAR NOT" SEEMS DOOMED.

THE cold endured by our Arctic heroes during their imprisonment that winter in the fjord of the Isle of Desolation—as they had named it—was intense, terrible!

The temperature one never-to-be-forgotten night ran down to about 70° below zero (Fahrenheit). Such cold had never before been experienced even by Sigurd, and I have not the slightest doubt that had it continued but a few days every one on board would have succumbed to it.

Up till twelve o'clock on this particular night no one thought of turning in. Nor could anyone in the saloon sit for any length of time in his seat. They found it best to keep moving, to walk back and fro, to stamp on the deck like soldiers marking time, and to beat their hands against

their breasts. It was almost impossible to keep the fires alight either forward or aft.

About midnight the saloon people were almost worn out with their exertions, and so sleeping-bags and rugs were brought out, and they prepared to huddle down all together in front of the fire.

Poor Cæsar sat shivering and whining by the stove, positively crying with the cold, and a pitiful sight to see till Olaf made him a bed and spread over him an eider-down quilt that had belonged to poor Lord Daybreak. And Pussy, watching her chance, crept in under and slept in his arms.

Svoldo's case was perhaps the worst. Half-bred Lapp though he was, he broke completely down. He was crying like a child when Rudland went forward to see some cases of frost-biting, and he begged and prayed of the doctor to put him down the ice-hole.

As the doctor came aft again he had a look in at the dogs' kennels. Only nine or ten were now alive out of all that had been brought on board. These were huddled together in a heap for warmth, and right in the centre of them lay Lakoff himself.

Luckily for all, the temperature rose next day fully thirty degrees, and the contrast from the bitterness of the previous night was very marked indeed.

The temperature rose then, and I may say here once and for all that it did not fall again so low that winter.

It was one evening not very long after that night of bitter cold, that all, with the exception of Rudland Syme, were seated at dinner. He was forward among his sick, for unfortunately both men and dogs were among his patients.

"Only three weeks more now, Joe, and once again our eyes shall feast upon the sunlight."

"Whoever lives to see it."

The voice came from Jones; but, instead of being in his usual happy tones, it was low, and almost sepulchral, little more, indeed, than a hoarse whisper. All eyes were turned in his direction. In the white glare of the electric light it is true that everyone looked more or less pale and some—

Sigurd, for instance—almost brassy owing to the long-lasting darkness of the Arctic night, but Jones was more than white or yellow, he was ghastly.

The conjunctivæ of his eyes, instead of being like pearls, as they ought to be in health, were like portions of a blood-orange. The balls themselves protruded, and there was a dark aureola around them.

"Aren't you very well?" said Olaf kindly as he placed one hand on his shoulder. "Aren't you very well, Jones?"

Jones turned his face towards Olaf and eyed him with a stony stare, his head moving upwards and downwards meanwhile, though he seemed to try to keep it steady.

At that moment Rudland himself entered.

"Two more dogs dead, and one poor man cannot—"

He stopped short as his eyes fell upon the Welsh engineer.

"Hullo!" he said. "Why, Jones, my boy, you have got a touch of the trouble. O, only a very slight touch"—Rudland was round behind Jones's chair by this time—"a very slight touch, else I wouldn't tell you. Now you must lie down for a short spell. I'll soon put you to rights."

"Here, drink this," he continued. The doctor had mixed a powder in some water and handed it to his patient. "Swallow it down at one bold gulp."

Jones did as he was told, and replaced the glass on the table with a kind of half-idiotic laugh, as if he felt bound to consider his illness as no end of a good joke.

That laugh alarmed his friends around the table more even than did the look of his ghastly face. He was got to bed as soon as possible.

"I'll send a man to nurse him," said Rudland.

"No," said Donaldson behind him, "I will nurse poor Jones. He is my mate, my pal."

And Rudland said no more.

"O, run forward, sir!" cried Henry, coming quickly in without the ceremony of knocking. "Run forward, doctor. Another man is taken ill!"

The doctor was off at once, and hardly anyone of those left behind thought much of dinner that day.

Nobody awaited the doctor's return more anxiously

than did Reynolds himself. What was this strange and awful trouble that bid fair not only to decimate his little crew, but apparently to annihilate the whole expedition. What was it, and how would it end? These were questions that none could answer. Hardly even the doctor himself.

And here he comes at last. Sigurd and Joe were pacing the deck. Colin, Olaf, and Reynolds himself were in the saloon, reading, for to-night no one seemed to have any heart to talk.

"Come on, doctor. You are late, and, judging from your face, your tidings are not over-pleasant."

Looking thoroughly worn and weary, Rudland threw himself in front of the stove beside the great dog Cæsar. He glanced uneasily first towards the cabin where Jones lay moaning, and motioned to Colin to close the door. Colin did so.

"In the first stages of this strange and awful disease," said the doctor in a low voice, "the hearing is super-acute; afterwards the patient becomes oblivious, comatose."

"And the men forward, doctor?"

"One is dead. The other will die before morning. Ah, sir!" he added, "it is better they should not suffer long, better for themselves—better for those left behind."

Reynolds heaved a sigh; he was deeply grieved.

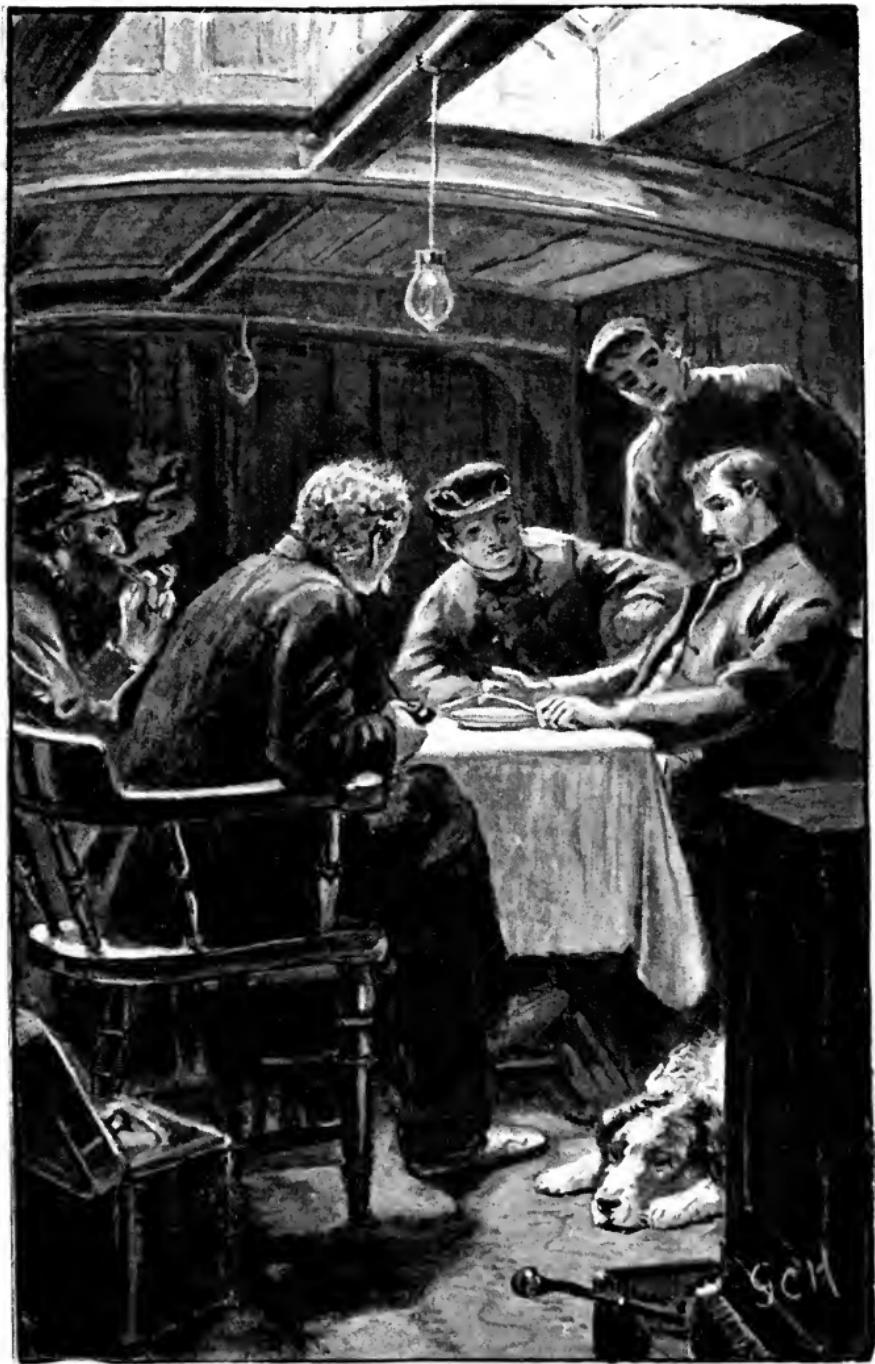
"Is there nothing to be done?"

"I believe," answered Rudland Syme with some degree of naïveté, "I believe, sir, I am doing all that medical science can suggest."

"My good fellow!" cried Reynolds, grasping his surgeon's cold hand, "I know that, and heaven only knows what we should do without you. But what I meant to say was this, 'Is there nothing that I can do? Can I make any wholesale reform in the ship?' Last time, you know, when we were threatened by this black death—if that is what you call it—employment, if you remember, kept the minds of the men active, and staved away the dread disorder."

What Rudland said next he seemed to say to the fire rather than anyone near him.

"It is the result of the intense cold, the result of a skin





that is no longer able to do its duty or remove effete matter from the blood. Ten times more work is thus thrown upon the liver; there is congestion, inflammation, occlusion, utter degeneration, and speedy break-up, uræmia, and blood-poisoning, and death."

"Doctor, doctor, doctor!"

Rudland looked up.

'Joe and Sigurd had just come in, and it was Joe who had spoken. "O, doctor, don't dose us with physiology. Quinine is bitter enough, but quinine is sugar to the 'ologies, one and all. But, sir," continued Joe, now addressing Captain Reynolds, "I heard your last question, sir. You hinted at employment as a preventative to the plague."

"Don't say plague," said Colin. "It sounds too awful, Joe."

"Well, the trouble. And now, sir, in my opinion exercise without an object is not much use. One likes to see results. Hitting a log with the back of the axe would be exercise after a fashion, but the man isn't born who could continue long at the work. He wants to see the chips fly."

"True, Joe," said Reynolds.

"Joe," said Rudland, "making you a sailor has spoiled a good doctor."

"And now," continued the mate, "old Sigurd wants a word with you, sir."

"Speak, Sigurd. Have you any advice to offer?"

Sigurd slowly lit his pipe. Then he spoke.

"We'll soon have the sun back?"

"Yes, my friend."

"Then spring will come, and at any time we may have another ice-crush, another squeeze!"

"That is probable."

"These nips come on, sir, with awful suddenness!"

"Sometimes—yes, often."

"Mostly. Now, sir, my advice is this, be prepared. If a jam comes on we may save our lives by making a mad rush shorewards, but there we will land all but naked, for to save stores would be impossible."

"And you counsel?"

"I counsel the making of a camp on shore, and the sooner we begin the better."

"Captain Reynolds," cried Rudland Syme, starting to his feet, "Sigurd speaks the truth; and the excitement and exertion of camp building may save us all. You see, sir," he continued, placing the point of one forefinger against the point of another, as if to emphasize his words, "you see, sir, and you see, men all, this form of exercise proposed by Sigurd will excite action in the skin, it will tend to exhilarate the mind, the psychical will thus once more regain its equality with the physical, the nerves of organic—"

A friendly arm was outstretched. It was Joe's. A friendly hand was clapped across the doctor's mouth. That, too, was Joe's, and Rudland could say no more.

Reader mine, if you choose to think back you will remember that I took you on a voyage of the mind, or on an aerial journey, straight away north along the meridian line till we crossed the Pole itself, and flying on and on brought up at or about the place not far off the New Siberian Islands where the *Fear Not* took to the ice. It was a very quick and very easy voyage, because you might have taken it with your toes on your own fender all the time, and the cat singing on the footstool.

Well, I want now to take you another journey, only instead of this being a journey due north, it is a flight in quite the opposite direction.

We leave, then, the *Fear Not*, lying under the stars of the Arctic night, plague-stricken, at the Isle of Desolation, all hands plunged in grief, yet hope still burning brightly in each heart. We leave her there, and southwards and away we fly—south, and south, and south.

With one leap almost we leave night and darkness and welcome the glad sun that is brightly shining, on a morning early in April, over the straths and vales of Iceland, already showing signs of reviving after their long winter's sleep.

But now we strike more to the westward. We hardly touch at the lone Faroe Isles. Fain would we rest for a

time in the sea-girdled peat-mosses of Shetland and Orkney, but time is too precious. So on we fly southwards still. And here we are at last at Moira House, the home of Colin's uncle, Grant M'Ivor.

Nothing seems changed in the least, although it is going on for two years since you and I were here. More than three years, do you say? I believe you are right. How time does fly, to be sure!

No, nothing seems changed. Yonder are the grand old hills, the snow still lingering in patches near to the summits of some of the highest, and there it will lie or linger all the summer through till winter comes again and hides it with a fall that is softer and whiter.

But spring has already come to the bonnie glen. The rooks have been building ever so long ago, and a pretty noise they are making, too, high up in the swaying trees; a noise that quite drowns the bickering riot the sparrows make. The kestrel, too, has a nest with blood-red eggs in the far depths of the pine wood, and the owls and magpies are all absorbed in family cares. There are blackbirds' nests also in low spruce trees, and thrushes in the larch, which is already fringed with green tassels and buds of crimson.

The whole forest is alive with bird-melody, and high above the green earth sings the fluttering laverock.

Grant M'Ivor is in the garden. Elspet is bustling about as of yore indoors, and so, too, is old Murdoch, while Duncan and his faithful collie are taking the sheep to the hills.

But it is early yet. The sun has not long risen over the south-eastern hills, while a pale and sickly half-moon is slowly declining in the west and north.

Who comes yonder? The laird hurries forward to meet a bold, brown-faced sailor man, a man who could never look anything else but a sailor let him try as hard as ever he could. It is our old friend Uncle Tom, *alias* Captain Jones, *alias* Jolly Captain Junk.

Hands meet and are heartily shaken.

"Well, brother, and how did you sleep? And how is my sister-in-law, your dear little wife?"

"Slept like a twopenny top. Wife dressing, and will be down in a minute. Come, I want to find some wallflower, because I know she likes it."

By and by Mrs. Captain Jones herself enters the garden, smiling and happy.

Why, wonders will never cease. Mrs. Captain Jones, who now stands before us, is no other than Miss Dewar that was Miss Dewar of Kilmorrack House, Union Street, Aberdeen!

How did it all turn out? Well, that question I am really not prepared to answer. Miss Dewar had many winning ways of her own, you know, and Captain Junk was a sailor, a warm-hearted sailor. Well, Providence somehow arranged it so that they were thrown together pretty often, and—and—well, it ended in Miss Dewar changing her name, and that is all I know about this matter.

But here comes Katie. Why, she has changed. She is now—

"A sweet, bonnie maiden
Of bashful fifteen."

She is taller and prettier now, and she has been to a good school, and not only looks a little lady, but talks like one.

Soon Mrs. M'Ivor comes down, and shortly all are seated at table, while Murdoch and a neat-handed Phyllis go bustling round to make sure that all are served.

Just before breakfast M'Ivor and Uncle Tom, as I still like to call him, opened their letters.

"Yes," said Tom, "yes, Grant, I find that Lord Day-break's brother is still determined to go out to Franz Josef Land in the yacht *Aurora*. He feels certain, he says, that the *Fear Not* is in distress. No, I cannot tell you how he arrives at this conclusion. He says he has had strange dreams, that is all, and that might mean anything. And—"

Uncle Tom paused, and glanced across the table at his wife.

"Don't be afraid to speak, dear," says Mrs. Jones smiling.

"I am to go out as commander."

"Impossible!" said Mrs. Jones; "impossible, dear. You don't know the sea of ice. You would be of no good at all."

"Well, well," laughed Uncle Tom, "my post would be only a sinecure after all, though I suppose I'd be useful. I really think, Grant, that Lord Daybreak's brother only wants me for company's sake."

"And," said Mrs. Jones, "if you go for company to Sir William, I shall go to keep you company. And I shall take with me my dear little friend, Katie, here."

"O," cried Katie, her eyes dancing with delight, "that would be indeed delicious!"

"Nonsense, sister!" said M'Ivor. "It will end in neither you nor brother Jones going."

"Well, we'll see," said Uncle Tom. "Only Sir William is about the busiest man in Aberdeen at this very moment, fitting out his brother's yacht for service in the Arctic regions."

"Man proposes, but God himself disposes," said M'Ivor solemnly.

"His will be done," added Uncle Tom.

And no more was said on the subject.

CHAPTER X

A LONESOME GRAVE—SVOLTO'S DOOM—THE AWFUL STORM —THE BARQUE GOES DOWN.

UNDER the starlight, under the uncertain light of the flickering aurora, bright and shimmering for one hour, dazzling the next, but anon dying away and leaving the stars to rule the Arctic night, our heroes worked now as few men probably have ever worked before in a situation so sad, so apparently hopeless. But, at all cost, at all risk, boats, sledges, and stores must be got on shore, for the

impossibility of saving the ship was now apparent to everyone.

It seems strange that the idea of making a landing on the Isle of Desolation had not occurred to Reynolds or to some of the others as well as to Sigurd. I can only account for this in one way. For the last month or two a strange drowsiness had attacked all hands, with the exception of Svolto, Lakoff, and Sigurd.

Perhaps to say that this drowsiness "attacked" them is putting it somewhat too strongly. Shall we say that it stole over them? Be this as it may, Dr. Rudland Syme, while confessing that he could not quite explain the matter physiologically, put it down to the extreme cold, praying inwardly that it might not be the first symptoms of a disease that should lay all hands low in death.

But even the dogs suffered in the same way. They awoke only to eat, and were never really active except when on deck or on the ice at exercise.

For men and officers Rudland prescribed caffeine, but he had more hope from the hard work they had now commenced than from any medicine whatever.

The first visit to the shore was one made for the purpose of prospecting. They took one sledge and a few of the dogs. Though it was scarcely a mile as the crow flies to the awful embankment of ice that had been piled up along the beach at the top of the wild fjord, it took them three hours to make this, on account of the roughness of the ice. But during this time they succeeded in finding, or rather in a great measure fashioning, a pathway shorewards. This wound in and out, and must have been fully two miles long altogether.

They were lucky enough to find a kind of icy cañon at the foot of the glen opening on to the field of floes, and up along this they took their way. Though I call it a cañon, in many parts it was so narrow as to be but a mere lane or crevasse, the rock-like ice on each side sometimes overhanging it, sometimes almost meeting at the top, while in several places it was quite bridged over with banks of snow.

It brought them out at last, however, into the glen itself,

and they now set about looking for a sheltered spot at which to make their encampment. This they were not long in finding, and then, being thoroughly tired and hungry, a halt was called for rest and food. After this Reynolds stood up.

"Come, men," he said.

The men he addressed were Joe, Olaf, and Colin.

Reynolds led the way a little farther up the snow-clad glen to a spot where, curiously enough, stood a tall pyramidal rock. It was almost in the centre of a dell, and seemed a portion left by glaciers in their downward sweep towards the sea.

Reynolds stopped here. He looked towards Joe, and Joe nodded an affirmative nod.

He took off his coat and threw it on the snow, then began to ply busily enough a spade and axe he had brought with him. Whenever he seemed tired, Olaf or Colin took a spell. So hard was the ice that the work kept them all warm for nearly an hour.

"Deep enough," said Reynolds at last.

Joe dragged himself slowly to bank, and stood with Colin and Olaf by his side gazing down into—a new-dug grave.

"Poor Jones!" said Reynolds with a sigh. "He will sleep soundly enough there."

"It will be, indeed, a lonesome grave."

Joe said nothing. He was thinking.

Their next visit to the shore took place on the day following. With the exception of Svolto and the doctor, all the crew of the unfortunate *Fear Not* attended that strange funeral. The coffin was borne on a sledge, and drawn by dogs. It was covered over with the Union Jack.

Winding in and out among the floes and hummocks, on and on went the procession, no word being spoken by anyone all the way. As they entered the icy cañon a peculiarly brilliant display of aurora took place, and this continued long after poor Jones' body was laid to rest beneath the eternal snows.

Surely a more impressive funeral never took place in this world. I am not striving after effect when I tell

you, reader, that while Reynolds read the beautiful service of the English Church there was not a dry eye around that cold and glassy grave.

"We commit his body to the ice, his spirit to the God who gave it."

Then the mourners went slowly back to their ship.

There was nothing for a time now save bustle and stir aboard the *Fear Not*. Indeed, she resembled a ship preparing to sail for a foreign land, so littered were her decks with bags and boxes. And to and from the shore continually passed the caravans of dogs and sledges.

For the most part, Reynolds himself, with Joe and Sigurd and the doctor, remained on board. They had plenty to do in superintending the getting up of the stores and in choosing what they should take with them, and what they could afford to leave behind. All this entailed a considerable deal of thought and consideration. But at long last everything was landed, and all was finished to Reynolds' entire satisfaction.

The season had now so far advanced that there was a little twilight before and after mid-day; and one morning, as we call it, a long streak of golden cloud was hailed with joy. It was very high up in the sky; but it was the herald of coming day, and a glad ray of hope shone in every heart as they beheld it. Next day,—O glorious sight!—the tops of the highest mountains were tipped with roseate hues, with shadows of purple and violet.

Nothing would content Olaf now except an expedition next day high up one of the hills to meet the sun. Colin and he went alone with the two dogs, Cæsar and Keltie. It was a long climb and a difficult one, especially for the dogs, but they sat down to rest at last, Olaf holding his watch in his hand, both waiting with almost feverish impatience.

There were clouds athwart the horizon when they sat down — purple clouds and gray. But gradually they changed to crimson and gold, while all along the horizon westward and east was bathed in an opal mist, and all

between the island and this lay the wondrous sea of ice which was almost dazzling in its brightness.

The golden clouds in streaks and cumulus changed now almost suddenly into the brightest silver, and then—the sun uprose.

"Why, Olaf," exclaimed Colin, "what a sentimental little chap you are!"

Olaf was crying.

Three hours after this the sky was overcast, and pitchy darkness reigned everywhere around.

Now that all the work was finished, the reaction came, and a gloom settled down on the hearts of all on board that the situation—and this was sad enough—was scarcely sufficient to account for.

At dinner conversation seemed to be maintained by mere force of will, but after that meal, when all settled themselves around the stove, it flagged entirely.

Reynolds was sleeping in his chair, the cat on his knee as usual. Donaldson and Joe sat at the table reading, while Colin and Olaf had both curled up and were fast asleep, their heads pillowled on Cæsar's back. It must have been long past eleven o'clock—near to midnight, in fact—yet no one seemed inclined to stir.

Hark! What a strange sound that is which suddenly breaks in upon the deep stillness of the Arctic night! All started up, wide enough awake now. They listened, holding their breath, and soon the sound was repeated. Was it thunder! It must be. Yet surely the strangest thunder ever listened to. Each roll appeared an explosion as of a far distant mine being sprung, and this was followed by low, muttering sounds passing far to east and west, and even towards the north. But the explosions themselves, that grew momentarily louder and louder, came apparently from over the southern hills of the Isle of Desolation.

Was it thunder?

The question was asked at Sigurd by Reynolds himself, as he stood on the quarter-deck with his people around him, gazing out upon the pitchy darkness beyond the tent. But Sigurd himself appeared puzzled.

Meanwhile the lightning began to play incessantly from the clouds that enveloped the ice-clad mountain tops. Then came a kind of lull, and the silence was such as probably no Arctic voyager had ever experienced before. It must have been like the dread silence of the outer darkness that reigns beyond the visible universe. In this country here it is difficult, indeed, to conceive of a silence so deep, so awful—no, not even on the lone mountains of Scotland.

Nature seemed holding her breath and listening, even as the awe-struck people of the *Fear Not* stood there listening, waiting, and wondering what was going to follow, what was going to happen next.

They had not long to wait. A sheet of flame spread athwart the sky, quivering in a thousand forked and sword-like tongues among the hills and bergs and floes. The crash of the explosion that followed was ten times more terrible than any they had yet heard.

And now crash followed crash, peal on peal reverberated from every side, and the fire-flashes descended to the surface of the pack, till the whole looked like a sea of heaving ice and fire. Then hail fell, and snow, the lightning gleaming red through it with an effect that was wondrously weird and awesome.

For a whole hour this curious convulsion of nature lasted, and I am of opinion, even unto this day, that it was partly of volcanic origin, for, before now, Reynolds had noticed that every visible hill had the appearance of an extinct volcano.

But worse than this storm was to follow. For a motion was now apparent in the ice-pack, though it began very gradually. A motion which both Reynolds and Sigurd knew but too well betokened the break-up of the ice-floes around them. It was accompanied by all the noises, the groaning, the shrieking, and the grinding usual to an ice-crush. Loud reports, too, were heard here and there around the now doomed ship, and the loudest of all these was one that seemed close alongside.

The sky was clear by this time, and the aurora light was

very brilliant. In its strange, uncanny glimmer our heroes suddenly saw the ice-palace topple and fall to pieces.

There was a shout now—"All hands on deck!"

"Save the dogs! Save the dogs!" cried Lakoff.

He rushed wildly to the gangway as he spoke, but was held back by main force.

But Svolto had rushed forward and swung himself over the bows. For a time he was seen struggling from ice boulder to ice boulder, sometimes tottering, sometimes falling, but intent only on reaching the snow igloo and releasing the dogs, whose mournful and frightened howling was heard high above even the noises of the rending ice-pack.

There was no possibility of bringing the poor lad back by force. It would have been madness to follow him. He is going to do or die! He will save the dogs, or he will perish with them.

No one on board spoke, but hands were clasped, prayers were breathed, and eyes were strained after Svolto. But the weird light of the aurora that played in coloured curtains around his head but served to light the poor boy to his doom.

That doom was death. He had reached the igloo. He was struggling with its wooden door, when, without a moment's warning, the great floe beyond rose—then fell, then pressed onward slowly, but ah! so surely! The igloo and the ice on which it had been built were crushed and crumbled into pieces.

Svolto was seen no more. A cataract of water, snow, and ice was thrown high above the ship's tent. In the midst of it was a struggling dog or two, but not one was saved.

The floe that had done the mischief was probably the largest in the pack. It was now close alongside the ship, and in less than an hour all hands had scaled its heights, and for a time were safe and sound.

Soon after this the unfortunate ship heeled over. Great and grand was the struggle she made to bear up against the fearful forces opposed to her. But the floe on which she had rested crumbled to pieces at last. Once more the good ship righted. She was on an even keel in the water, her

masts darkly silhouetted against the sheeny star-lit ice-cliffs. But slowly, slowly she sank by the stern.

The floe on which our heroes stood, sadly watching her end, receded, leaving for a minute or two a space of open water, and there and then the barque went down.

The last portion seen of her was the jibboom, raised darkling against the snow like an arm mutely appealing for help.

CHAPTER XI.

DEATH OF LAKOFF AND CHAUSS—POOR HENRY!—A TERRIBLE JOURNEY—“THE ICE WAS OPENING.”

THAT was a night of terror the horrors of which would never be forgotten.

Death seemed inevitable. The motion in the pack was fearful; all ahead was a sea-tossed icy chaos, all behind the heaving, swinging giant floes rising and falling like waves of the ocean betwixt them and the starlit horizon.

The cold was intense in its bitterness, but they heeded it not. They stood, sat, or lay there huddled together waiting for the end they believed could not now be far away.

The floe on which they were was moving slowly shorewards, but piece after piece was parting from it, driving them farther and farther in towards the centre, till at last there was only the central hummock between them and death.

Morning broke at last, or twilight came, rather; morning would follow very shortly, then evening in an hour. So utterly hopeless and forlorn were they, that no one for a time noticed that the motion in the pack was considerably less, and that the noises had almost ceased.

I think Reynolds was almost asleep. Had he dropped off entirely it would have been to—

“Sleep the sleep that knows no breaking
Morn of toil, nor night of waking”.

Sigurd seized him by the shoulder, and shook him roughly. The action was kindly meant.

Reynolds started to his feet in an instant. He was himself again at once. He smiled and nodded to Sigurd, who was pointing shorewards. Yes, they must try to save themselves, but how they would be able to cross that sea of ice-boulders seemed a mystery.

Soon the sun rose, and the attempt must be made. Now or never! Yes, it must be now or never. But one other poor fellow, alas! would not accompany them. That was Lakoff.

"Is he asleep?" said Colin, approaching the spot where he lay, his pale yellow face upturned to the sky, his faithful dog Chauuss with his paws outspread across the beloved master's chest.

He is very still! Colin bends down and touches his forehead. He is dead! And dead, too, the honest dog who lies beside him.

Before they make any attempt to save themselves, they dig a grave beside the hummock with a piece of splintered wood, and in this they place both dog and master. Good friends and true they had been in life; in death they are not divided.

This world is not a very happy one to some of us, yet we all want to live, and there is no struggle so fierce, so terrible as that which men make to save their lives. Herein lies some mystery which the wisest amongst us is unable to solve.

I do not know quite how these castaways managed it; but by bridging over the ice-boulders with wood and spars which they found near to them, they succeeded after almost super-human exertions in at long last reaching the shore.

But their difficulties were not even yet at an end, for they found that the cañon or wide crevasse that led upwards to the glen where their camp and their stores were, was closed by huge masses of ice.

This was a terrible discovery, for their sufferings from the cold, from anxiety, and want of sleep were extreme,

and several of them on reaching the shore had thrown themselves on the ice, with no wish apparently but to sleep—and to sleep was to die.

The most active among the crew were Olaf and Sigurd. They went off together along the ice-foot prospecting, while every one of the others, Reynolds excepted, had given up all hopes of being saved. Even Colin was heartless. So, too, was Joe.

"In all probability," said the latter mournfully, "the crush will commence again to-night, then the ice will curl up and bury us alive or dead."

Meanwhile Sigurd and Olaf had disappeared. They came again, however, and soon, too. And, O joy! they brought with them some food and rum. If ever vinous stimulant proved a blessing it did so now. The men revived under its influence and that of the food, and were soon hopeful and ready for the road once more.

The road, so unexpectedly found by Sigurd, was indeed a toilsome and dangerous one, leading, as it did, almost perpendicularly up the face of the great ice-foot. But they struggled on, the bolder and stronger amongst them lending a helping hand to the weaker, till at long last they reached the cliff top, just as the sunset glow was fading away on the northern horizon, and stars were beginning to peep out in the south and east.

Never, surely, did sleeping-bags feel so snug before, or a camp on the cold, icy ground and beneath the stars so comfortable. I believe that everyone hurried through with dinner in order to turn in for the sake of warmth and repose.

In justice to my Arctic heroes, however, I must mention that no move was made to get the sleeping-bags out, until they had first and foremost knelt down there on the snow beside their silken tent and returned thanks to God the Lord, who rules on earth as well as in heaven high, for the deliverance from a terrible death they had just experienced, a deliverance which all allowed was but little short of miraculous.

There was no sentry set to-night, and no need of one.

What could harm them in this great white and silent land? Nothing, at least no creature. They themselves were the only living, breathing beings here, nor had they anything to dread to-night from either storm or tempest.

How soundly they slept, therefore! and when they awoke at last it was to find that the gray dawn of the short and wintry day was already beginning to appear in the north-north-east.

There was hope in every heart, there was joy in every eye. Alas! though, that joy was but short-lived; one of their number was missing. Yes, the strange ailment which Rudland Syme called mania borealis, had claimed another victim. The case was such a sad one that the reader will excuse me if I dwell but a very short time on it.

Henry the steward, then, had wandered away from the camp—mad. They found his trail just as they had found that of poor Lord Daybreak, and, like his, Henry's also led in the direction of the ship. The direction of the ship, or the place where the ship had lain, was, of course, over the face of the cliff.

At the ice-foot they found the poor fellow's mangled body and brought it to bank. They dug him a grave near to that of young Jones the engineer. There, side by side, they are lying now, and side by side they will repose—

“Till the sea gives up its dead”.

Three long and eventful months have passed away since Henry's death and burial on the Isle of Desolation. Eventful, I well may say. It is not in one volume, and scarce in two, that I could relate all that befell our heroes in this time, and all the sad sufferings they endured.

But let me briefly mention a few of these, and give a short epitome of their strange adventures and wanderings.

First and foremost, then, this fact was speedily recognized by Reynolds, namely, that if the remainder of his people were to be saved, they must get southwards against all hazards and without delay. Not even a day was to be lost.

The Isle of Desolation was very far north indeed. As

near as I can guess, this land is about 86° N. at its most northerly point, and about 10° west longitude at its easternmost shore.

It was almost a continent, indeed. But, call it island or call it continent, it matters little which, only Reynolds determined to cross it. Luckily, the surface was good, so that in ten days' time they succeeded in reaching the sea of ice once more.

But now their real work only began. Near to the southerly shore of the island the ice was fairly good, and the progress made was most satisfactory. They found it best, however, to abandon one boat—they had landed at the island with two—and even this was considered a terrible drag; but necessary.

So thought, and so said everyone. A time would come, they hoped, when they should arrive at open ice and finally in open water, and then this boat would be their only hope.

What poor blind mortals we are! On reading and studying the journal of Captain Reynolds, I feel convinced that, but for an accident that happened during their slow progress across the palæocystic ice, the remarkable journey might have had an ending that is all too terrible even to contemplate.

They had been travelling across a floe-berg, and had reached a pack of even rougher though smaller ice beyond, when the sky suddenly darkened overhead. Storms far north in Arctic seas come on at times with the speed and force of white squalls in the Indian Ocean. This particular storm was fearful while it lasted. It was fearful above, the cold was intense, the snow and ice-dust were almost suffocating, the floes all in motion, and a noise around them that made talking impossible.

All this at night, too! There had been no time to get up the tent, so they huddled all together and waited.

When day broke, for the season had so far advanced that night was very short, to their utmost consternation they discovered that their only boat had been nipped and crushed and sunk amongst the ice-boulders. With it,

too, had gone down many valuable stores, together with Reynolds's instruments of observation.

The grief they suffered now was almost paralysing in its effects upon their spirits. Reynolds was the first to recover.

"Men," he cried, pointing southwards, "we are not going to be beaten. What matters a paltry boat? Bah! I am not going to grieve. When the pack breaks up at last and these floes begin to separate, any single one of them will be to us a raft on which we can float southwards into safety."

And so, with greater heart than ever, the journey had been renewed, and it was now found that without the boat they could easily double their daily record.

The days had grown longer and longer, till the sun rose to set no more for many months to come.

Whatever misgivings Reynolds had as to the result of this wondrously forced march southwards across the sea of ice he kept deep buried in his own heart. The way was rough enough at times. At times the ice was apparently all but impassable. Yet the ice was never rough enough, apparently, to daunt our brave hero Reynolds. In fact difficulties appeared only to make him all the more determined to struggle on.

But, alas! their comforts now were but small. Hitherto, in all their wanderings, they always looked forward to a good sleep and rest at night, but their sleeping-bags had by this time got sadly worn, and admitted both the frost and the drifting snow.

The great dog Cæsar perhaps showed his wisdom in abandoning any such nocturnal shelter. He curled up in a sledge, with no covering from the elements except his shaggy coat, and poor little Keltie invariably slept between his fore-paws or under the noble Newfoundland's tail, when it was curled round across his chest. Indeed, one would have thought that the dog brought round that monstrous tail for the express purpose of giving his little friend a cosy shelter from the cutting wind or biting frost.

Luckily for our heroes, their provisions lasted, and these were not heavy or difficult to carry, else in their now

weakened condition they would have been unable to drag them over the ice.

Medical comforts, too, they still had, and of these Rudland Syme was not sparing. Why should he be? If those poor wanderers were to be saved at all, those medical comforts would last. They would last till hope itself must be abandoned and death be their only friend.

Their shoes were at last almost worn out. This was one of the greatest trials of all. To cross a field of pack-ice, even when well-shod, is hard work enough when one has days and days of it. But to traverse it with half-frozen, ulcerated, and bleeding feet—ah! think of it, reader.

Their clothes were also in tatters, especially at the shoulders, where the dragging-ropes passed over, and these were, like their feet, sorely skinned or covered with blood-blisters, from which excruciating pains sometimes darted down to the very tips of their swollen and tingling fingers.

There came a day when, by general consent, a rest was taken—a rest, indeed, that appeared to be imperative. No one seemed to care to move that morning, not even the dogs, nor poor Pussy Baudrons, the ship's cat, who, strange as it may seem to those who have not made the feline race a study as I have done, had stuck not only to the expedition through all its toils and dangers and difficulties, but individually to Reynolds himself, her affection for whom was very genuine indeed.

Nor was Reynolds ashamed to confess that he regarded Pussy with feelings that were stronger far than those of friendship. It may be that with these was mingled just a slight thread of superstition, for it seems to me superstition lingers long in the heart of your true British sailor just as it does in the breast of the sturdy mountaineer.

The loss of his scientific instruments had been a very great blow indeed to brave Captain Reynolds. He still had his notes and journal, but at the present moment no means of determining either the latitude or longitude of the floe on which they were encamped.

The summer was far advanced, however; that much he

could easily guess, and, furthermore, he knew that the ice on which they were floating was a long way to the southward. For fogs were by no means uncommon, and dark and dense they were while they lasted. Then under the heat of the sun—if heat I can call it—the snow had begun to soften.

If any doubt remained in the mind of anyone that they were well to the south, it was dispelled that day, for about twelve o'clock, as near as they could judge, a heavy swell set in, the floes rose and fell, and tossed about like ships in a sea-way.

But there were not the usual distracting noises. The ice was opening. The floes were being detached in streams from the main pack.

In twenty-four hours' time, the wind meanwhile having come on to blow strongly from the north-west, the floe on which our Arctic heroes rested was out and away in the open ocean.

Reynolds and his people had exerted themselves sufficiently to raise in the centre of the floe masts which they made from the spars they had carried with them to form bridges on which to cross from floe to floe. On these masts they hoisted tarpaulin sails, and I think that, rough and rude though they were, these sails aided the floe's progress across the surface of the sea.

But whither were they being taken? Whither wafted? This was a question no one could answer. They were at the mercy, not of the waves, but of God Himself.

CHAPTER XII. *Bancroft Library*

THE END OF ALL.

FOR many days, perhaps for a whole week, they continued to float on that sea-swept floe. Their sufferings were acute, their plight and situation the most miserable that can well be conceived. No one now took any heed of time.

No note or heed of time! For they had laid them down, one might say, to die. Even Reynolds himself had lost all heart, all hope. His only wish now was that death might come, and come speedily, to end their long-drawn misery and wretchedness. For the sledges had been washed off the floe, and with them nearly all the food and medical comforts. Several were asleep. Some were dead!

In such dire distress, will it be considered out of place if I tell you, that with one of the sledges poor little Keltie had been rushed into the sea, and had doubtless long ere now formed a bite for the sharks, and that after this honest Cæsar seemed utterly lost, and refused his share in the food that was doled out to all alike?

It may easily be believed that to people in the condition to which the survivors of the *Fear Not* had been reduced, sleep was the best, the truest friend. As long as possible they had taken a kind of exercise, by stumping or stamping on the floe.

This form of exercise seemed at last to be dangerous, for piece after piece had separated from the berg, and there was no saying how quickly any form of combined movement might cause it to part or fall into boulders. Not that they minded death, but even *in extremis* men are loth to do anything that seems suicidally to invite the presence of the king of terrors.

The floe, indeed, was already perilously small. It had fallen asunder more than once. The last time of parting had reduced it to little more than simply a floating hummock.

Against this hummock they lay huddled together for warmth. Not that it was so very cold now when the sun shone. But his warm rays were very frequently obscured by darksome mists or fogs.

The beds or sleeping-bags, though sadly tattered and worn, still afforded some comfort to their bleeding feet and their pained and swollen shoulders.

When they spoke at all it was in low voices, almost in whispers. No need to talk loudly. The wind had quite gone down, and there was not a sound to be heard, save the

lapping of the wavelets against the green sides of the berg on which they floated.

Every now and then Rudland Syme, Sigurd, and Olaf, who were the least weak of the party, pulled themselves sufficiently together to make tea or coffee, and administer an allowance of food to the others.

For a short time after such a meal—if meal it can be called—nearly all revived somewhat, and sat up a little, leaning on their elbows, and gazing with weary, hot eyes across the blue-black ocean.

Once Colin threw carelessly into the sea a salmon-tin, which contained a little of the fish. Next moment the water was stirred with a commotion, that to weak and nervous men was startling indeed. Colin recoiled in horror.

Sharks! Not one, but several. And such monsters! The *Scymnus Borealis* is, probably, of all sharks the largest, often growing to the length of fifteen feet. And he is, perhaps, the fiercest.

“They have come for our bodies,” hoarsely whispered Joe.

“No,” said Reynolds, exerting himself to speak; “they have come for the dead that are amongst us. But O, men, we must not bury our messmates thus.”

“Sir,” said Sigurd, “I do not want to give you hope, or to take it to myself, but the presence of those sharks here tells me that we are not far off a pack of ice where men have been, or still may be, sealing.”

Sigurd’s words made a greater impression than any tonic medicine in the world could have done. Such a glorious thing is hope! Yet it seemed positively cruel in the extreme to revive this feeling in their hearts.

It was carried to a still greater extent, however, soon after this. Poor Donaldson, the Scotch engineer, had been several times delirious. It had taken the united strength of Olaf, Sigurd, and Joe to hold him on the floe. But exhausted nature claimed rest at last, and he had sunk to sleep—to wake no more his messmates thought.

But now, behold, he sits half up.

“Watch him!” whispered Rudland anxiously.

"Listen!" Donaldson said. "Listen!"

He put his hand behind one ear, and gazed intently southwards as he spoke.

"Don't you hear them, boys? Now they are silent once more. Ah! men, I am myself now. I have been delirious, mad almost. But these sweet voices came to me in my dreams.

"Listen! listen!" he called again. "Men, I hear them. Birds! birds! birds! We are saved."

Next minute far away in the fog all heard the voices of the sea-birds.

"Yes, men," cried Reynolds, "those are birds. We are near to help. Thank God!"

The bird voices in a short time seemed strangely near. O, how these poor people wished and prayed that the dense, dark fog would lift, though but for a moment!

But see, what is that in the air just above them? Sigurd —bold, brave, though somewhat superstitious—Sigurd was the first to see it. He clutched Reynolds by the arm and pointed upwards.

"The *hoid maage!* The *hoid maage!*" he cried. "The ivory gull has returned! The Father has not forgotten us!"

Then the poor fellow clapped his hands to his face, and as he shook and sobbed the salt, salt tears came welling through between his horny fingers.

Yes, the snow-bird had returned.

Only a blood-stained floe! But it was the first in an ice-pack, and all were blood-stained!

As the little berg on which our heroes floated rasped alongside these floes the joy and excitement of the poor castaways was far more intense than can be described in words. Those among them who were not too weak to rise started to their feet, although some tottered and fell again. Those unable to stand knelt, with hands and faces raised to heaven—knelt, and wept, and prayed.

Only a blood-stained floe!

"Cheer, men! Shout, boys; shout if you can! They may hear us, and, despite the fog, come to our relief. For,

see, the body of this seal is still warm, and here is one that is hardly dead! Raise your voices then. One and all. Hip—hip—hip—Hurrah!"

Even great Cæsar joined that cheer. His trumpet-bay would be heard for miles.

Listen! It is the sound of a rifle and an answering cheer.

Olaf pulled the trigger of his gun. Again they shouted, and from out of the fog to the south once more came the reply.

A quarter of an hour afterwards they could hear the clunk, clunk of oars in rowlocks, and then from out the darksome mist a great black boat came looming, a dark figure, club in hand, standing erect in its bows.

Saved! and the rescuers were sailors belonging to a Danish barque.

Only just in time. For their last boat was leaving the ice when, far away in the fog, they heard our heroes' feeble cheer, and the deep-mouthing baying of the noble dog. Yes, the last boat had been leaving, and the barque herself was heading southward and about to bear up for home.

Nothing could exceed the kindness of the Danish captain and his men to our poor fellows. She was but a rough ship outside and in, but to Reynolds and his people, after the terrible sufferings they had undergone, she was indeed a floating palace.

Only a rough, red-faced sailor man was her captain, but to the castaways he appeared to be indeed a saint.

Perhaps there was a little of the saint about Captain Jansen after all, for as he listened that day to Reynolds and our other heroes as they told their pitiful story, more than once his blue eyes filled with tears.

While they were yet talking, all sitting round the great stove in the saloon, or chief cabin, the patter of tiny feet was heard on the deck above, something came bounding, scrambling, tumbling down the companion, and next moment, to the utter astonishment of all, who should leap right across Cæsar's back and into Colin's arms but Keltie himself.

"Risen from the dead!" exclaimed Reynolds.

"Olaf, am I awake or dreaming?"—this from Colin.

But Cæsar sprang up whining with joy. He licked Keltie's face, he licked Colin's hand, he licked everybody's hand all round, he even kissed Pussy Baudrons; then nothing would satisfy him but to go dashing round and round the table by way of allaying his feelings, till he sunk at last almost exhausted near the stove.

"Where on earth did the doggie come from?" cried Joe.

Captain Jansen laughed right heartily.

"We found the little fellow," he said, "upon the ice dining off a seal's carcase, and barking at a bear that attempted to dispute with him the possession of his dainty meal."

"Well, well," said Reynolds, "wonders will never cease!"

But there were more wonders yet to come.

In the course of conversation next day, Captain Jansen mentioned having lately met a yacht that answered every description of poor Lord Daybreak's *Aurora*.

"It was blowing a bit at the time," said Jansen, "but we both lay-to, and got near enough to talk by writing words in chalk on the back of large tea-trays."¹

"No," he continued, "I could not make the name out. But this great yacht had been north as far as Spitzbergen, and she had been crushed in the ice. She was bearing up for Iceland to make good her damage, and must be lying at this moment in Reikjavik."

"If, Captain Reynolds," he added, "if it will do you any favour, I will touch at Iceland and make sure."

Reynolds grasped his host's rough, red hand.

"It will be one of the greatest favours that now, after saving my life, you can confer on me," he answered.

The Danish barque reached Reikjavik, the Iceland capital, safely at last.

¹ In Greenland ships often communicate thus with each other when the wind is too high to let a human voice be heard.

Yes, yonder lay the *Aurora*!

But I must leave the reader to imagine the meeting on the yacht's beautiful quarter-deck of our heroes with their friends and relations from bonnie Scotland.

Was it a joyful meeting? It was certainly a joyful reunion, albeit it was mingled with sorrow, for sad, indeed, was Sir William's heart when he heard of the death of his unfortunate brother.

Our people were heartily sorry to bid good-bye to Jansen and his ship, so great had been the kindness they had received at his hands. However, before sailing away the Danish captain promised that he would most assuredly pay them all a visit at Glen Moira, as soon as his ship was cleared and his men paid off.

The voyage of the good yacht *Aurora*, homeward-bound over the sunlit sea, was indeed a happy and prosperous one. Steam was never up all the way, the wind was fair, and the sky blue and almost cloudless. What more could sailor-heart desire?

The happiest man on board was brave Reynolds, the Arctic explorer.

Or was it Olaf? I am somewhat doubtful after all, for to the latter as he walked the moonlit quarter-deck with pretty little Katie Jackson at his side, life for the time being, at all events, was nothing short of idyllic.

Mrs. Jones was quietly happy too. And our old friend, Captain Junk, was simply the jolliest of the jolly.

Cæsar attached himself to Colin. Keltie stuck to Olaf. But Pussy Baudrons, the ship's cat, scarcely ever left the side of her chosen master—Captain Reynolds.

Just a few words more and then down the curtain drops on this drama of the Icy North.

The very day, then, after the *Aurora's* arrival in Aberdeen, all our heroes started for Glen Moira. Olaf's mother was there to greet him. Bonfires blazed on every hill, and the reception our heroes met with at Moira House was a true Highland welcome.

At this moment, reader, Rudland Syme, though that is not his name, is a prosperous physician in London. Colin M'Ivor is the captain of the *Blue Peter*. Olaf has married Katie. Reynolds is meditating a great expedition to the Antarctic Pole. And Olaf says he is going to join him in the venture—if Katie will allow him.

THE END.



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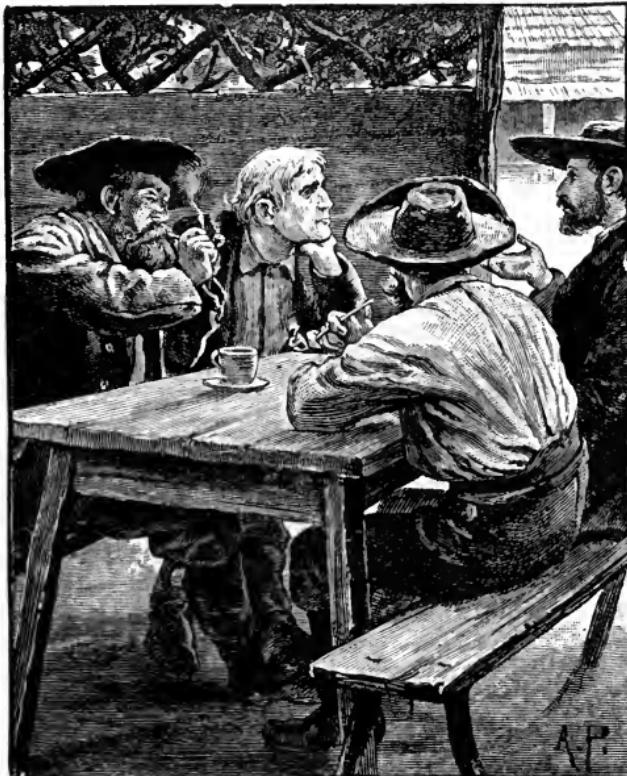
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